

TYPES OF SOURCES

Different types of documents hold information in different ways and include varying depths of coverage. If you know what you want from an article and recognize its type, you can extract useful information much more efficiently. Here are a few tips.

Reading Magazines and Newspapers

These tend to give a very fragmented coverage of an area. They will typically concentrate on the most interesting and glamorous parts of a topic. They will often ignore less interesting information that may be essential to a full understanding of a subject. Typically, areas of useful information are padded with large amounts of irrelevant information and/or advertising.

The most effective way of getting information from magazines is to *scan the contents tables or indexes*, and *turn directly to interesting articles*. If you find an article useful, *cut it out and file it* in a folder specifically covering that type of information. This will help you to build up sets of related articles that may explain the subject you are researching.

Reading Individual Articles

There are three types of articles within newspapers and magazines:

1. *News Articles* - The most important information is presented first, with information being less useful as the article progresses. They are designed to explain the key points first, and then conclude with detail.
2. *Opinion Articles* present a point of view. The most important information is found in the introduction and summary; the middle usually contains supporting arguments.
3. *Feature Articles* are written to provide entertainment or background on a subject. Typically, the most important information is in the body of the text.

Reading Whole Subject Documents

When you are reading an important document, it is easy to accept the writer's structure of thought. This means that you may not notice when important information has been omitted or that irrelevant detail has been included. A good way to spot omissions quickly is to *compile your own table of contents* before you open the document. Then, you can use this "table of contents" to *read the document in the order that you want*.

Using Glossaries with Technical Documents

If you are reading large amounts of difficult technical material, it may be useful to photocopy or compile a glossary. Keep this beside you as you read. It will also be useful to write down the key concepts in your own words, and refer to them when necessary. The most effective way of taking notes may be to use mind/concept maps.

Source: www.mindtools.com/rdstratg.html

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