

# Working with English Texts

Reading, taking notes, and skimming

Bridget Palmer, Centre for Language and Communication Studies

## Reading

- Reading for academic purposes
- Reading strategies (KWL, SQ3R)

## Text Structure

- Differences between Finnish and English
- Signposting
- Tools

## Taking notes

## Skimming

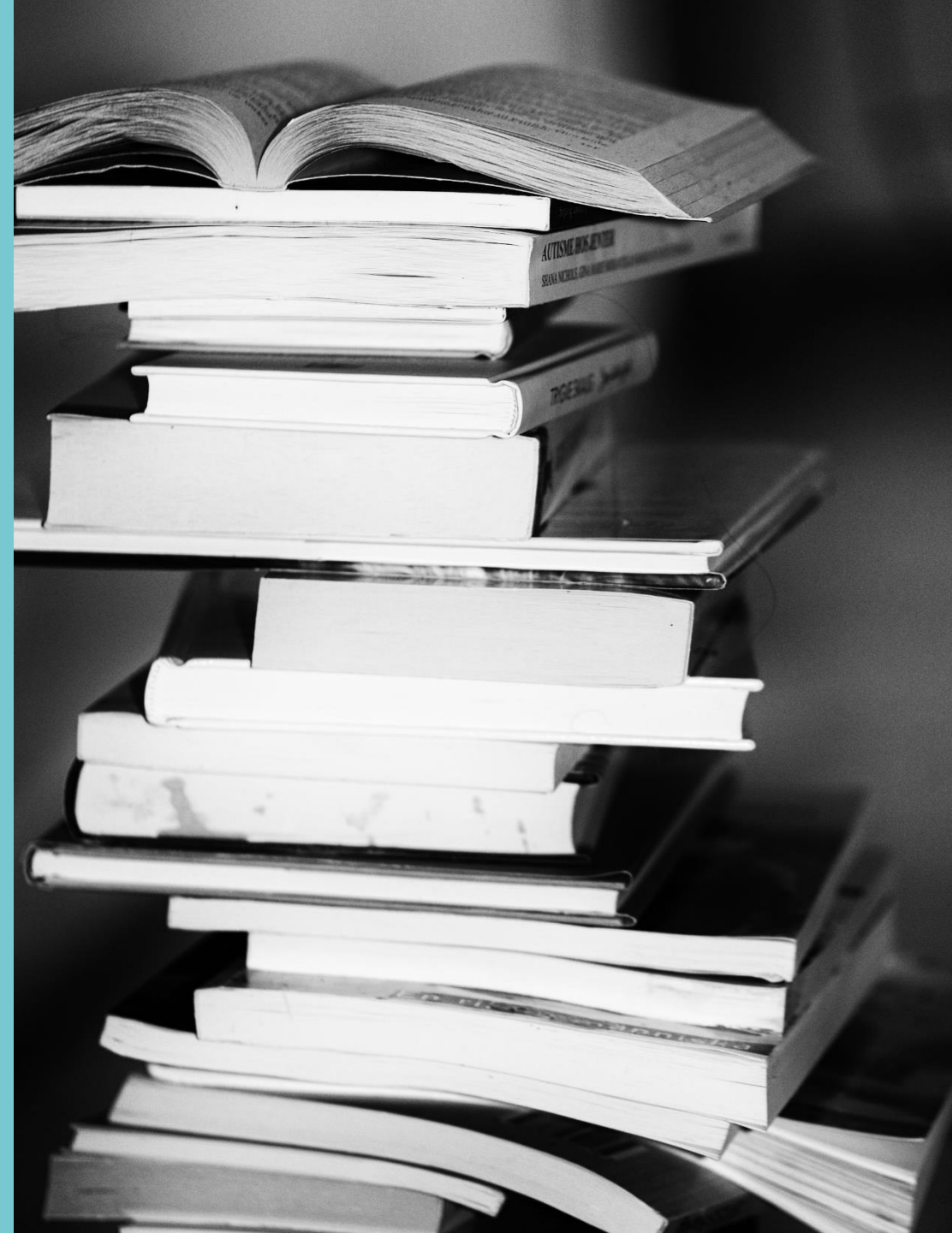
# Grab a book!

# How do you feel about reading?

What kinds of strategies are you already using for reading academic texts?

Do you think you need to improve your reading skills?

What kinds of texts are you reading, for what purposes?



**How is reading for  
academic purposes  
different?**





DAVE RAPPAPORT

THE FILLING  
STATION

SEBASTIAN  
SUPERNOOB  
SEBASTIAN  
SNOWBELLING

PETER  
SHADOW THIEVES

DOCK  
RUSSELL

BRISTON THE

THE  
A TITLES

FREDERICK  
MARRYAT  
EAST

ROGER'S  
PROBATION

ASIMOV'S  
ROBOT TRAVEL

ELIASCO

PATTERSON  
DOUBLE CROSS

SPY CATCHER

PICCOLI

INSIDE  
YAHOO

WATERS LIABILITY





**New Star**

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28 JANUARY 2014  
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Spain £2.50, Canary Islands £2.60

**Hello!**

**Lisa's SHOCK weight gain**

VF left me with a broken

**INSIDE MICHELLE HEATON'S STAR-STUDED BABY SHOWER AT HER HOME**  
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW AND PICTURES

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**CELEBRITY BIG BROTHER'S JASMINE**  
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW AND PICTURES

**'MY FEELINGS FOR LEE ARE GENUINE'**

**WHY IS SLAGGING OFF JORDAN... AND PETE**

This week's **hottest** celebrity news  
Issue 766 25 - 31 JANUARY 2014

**Heat**

**KIM & KANYE**

**THE WEDDING ON HOLD**

She's had enough of 'G'  
Kanye's violent outbursts  
refuses to be a pre

**KRIS JENNER SPEAKS**  
"I'LL A"



| SW 24 St & 87 Ave | SW 24 St & 82 Ave | SW 8 St & 87 Ave | SW 8 St & 57 Ave | SW 8 St & 42 Ave | SW 8 St & 27 Ave | SW 8 St & 12 Ave | Brickell Station | SW 1 St & Miami Ave |
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| :                 | :                 | 04:47AM          | 04:57AM          | 05:02AM          | 05:08AM          | 05:15AM          | 05:20AM          | 05:25AM             |
| 05:13AM           | 05:14AM           | :                | 05:26AM          | 05:31AM          | 05:37AM          | 05:44AM          | 05:49AM          | 05:54AM             |
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| 06:01AM           | 06:03AM           | :                | 06:17AM          | 06:23AM          | 06:31AM          | 06:40AM          | 06:47AM          | 06:54AM             |
| 06:10AM           | 06:12AM           | :                | 06:26AM          | 06:32AM          | 06:40AM          | 06:49AM          | 06:56AM          | 07:04AM             |
| :                 | :                 | 06:23AM          | 06:35AM          | 06:41AM          | 06:49AM          | 06:58AM          | 07:06AM          | 07:14AM             |
| 06:28AM           | 06:30AM           | :                | 06:44AM          | 06:50AM          | 06:58AM          | 07:08AM          | 07:16AM          | 07:24AM             |
| 06:35AM           | 06:37AM           | :                | 06:51AM          | 06:57AM          | 07:08AM          | 07:18AM          | 07:26AM          | 07:34AM             |
|                   |                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                     |



**When you are reading an academic text, you need to be active, efficient, and critical**

When you are reading an academic text, you need to be **active, efficient, and critical**

# Reading actively means:

looking for  
deep  
structure

engaging  
with the text

asking  
questions

seeking to  
understand



# Reading efficiently means:

making the  
most of your  
time

extracting  
meaning

moving  
through difficult  
sections

moving PAST  
difficult  
sections!

# Reading critically means:

making  
judgments  
about a text

learning to  
ask the right  
questions

**What are some  
reading strategies  
to try?**



# K-W-L Strategy

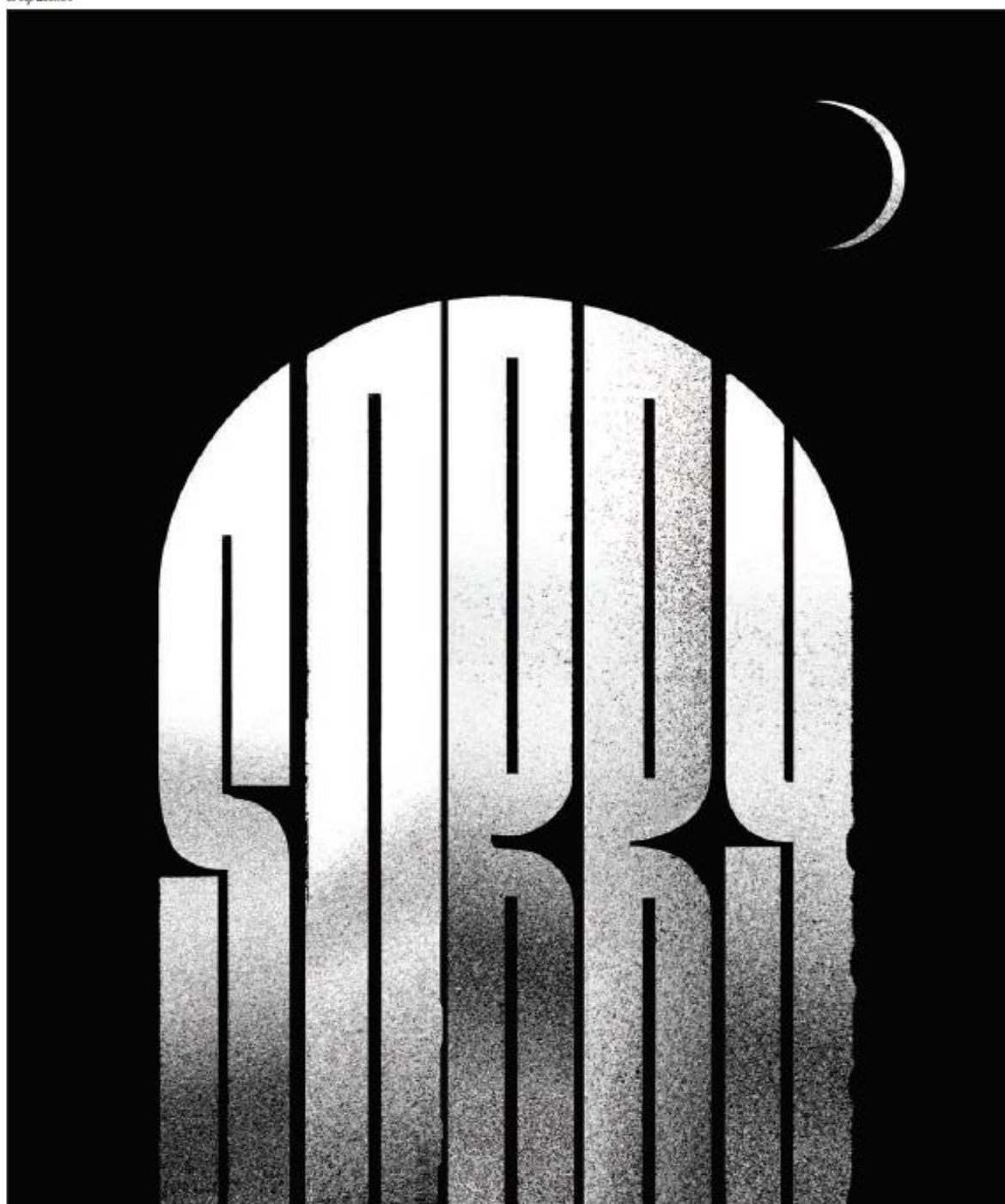
Ogle, D. M. (1986). KWL: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text. *The reading teacher*, 39(6), 564-570.

# The K-W-L Reading Strategy

Know Now

Want to  
Know

Learned



## NO APOLOGIES

*Why public figures stopped saying "I'm sorry"*

BY MEGAN GARBER

**I**n November 2017, Louis C.K. wrote an apology. Its four paragraphs, published in *The New York Times*, were a matter of expediency: The paper had just confirmed long-standing rumors that the comedian had, on several occasions, masturbated in front of unwilling female colleagues. But the apology was notable because—compared with those offered by other celebrities who'd been caught in the #MeToo movement's accountabilities—it was a relatively good one. It clearly admitted wrongdoing. It acknowledged the women C.K. had harassed. It suggested that he would find ways to atone. "The hardest regret to live with is what you've done to hurt someone else," C.K. wrote. "And I can hardly wrap my head around the scope of hurt I brought on them."

A year later, however, a very different Louis C.K. emerged. In a December 2018 stand-up set that leaked to YouTube, the formerly apologetic comedian was now apoplectic: He raged at political correctness; at the student survivor-activists of Parkland, Florida; at the way his career had met the business end of #MeToo. What-

give a shit," he fumed. "You can—you can be offended; it's okay. You can get mad at me. Anyway..."

Louis C.K.'s devolution was at once baffling and predictable. There was a time in American public life when atonement was seen as a form of strength—a way not only to own up to one's missteps, but also to do that classic work of crisis management: control the narrative. ("I'm the responsible officer of the government," John F. Kennedy said of the Bay of Pigs. "This happened on my watch," Ronald Reagan said of Iran-Contra. "I take full responsibility for the federal government's response," George W. Bush said of Hurricane Katrina.) Bucks stopped. Power came with responsibility.

Apologetic Louis C.K. operated within that old paradigm. Apoplectic Louis C.K., however, occupies a newer one—in which the true sign of power is not responsibility but impunity.

"I WILL BEGIN my presidency with a jobs tour," Mitt Romney said, accepting the Republican presidential nomination in 2012. "President Obama began with an apology tour."

things: an apologizer—for American history, for American values, for America itself. The mild-mannered Romney was seeking the presidency at a time when American politics was manifesting, ever more eagerly, as blood sport; mocking the sitting president as sorry in every sense was one of the concessions he made to the moment. Romney named his 2010 book *No Apology: The Case*

**"A SINCERE APOLOGY IS A WAY TO THE TRUTH, AND WE'RE SORT OF IN THAT POST-TRUTH MOMENT."**

for *American Greatness*. This was a slightly subtler version of a title on a Heritage Foundation report the year before: "Barack Obama's Top 10 Apologies: How the President Has Humiliated a Superpower."

The current steward of American humiliation has taken the logic of *sorry* you're sorry to a new extreme. Don-

administration official told *Politico*. "Generally speaking, he's not a big believer in backing down.") This summer, after a rally in which the president mistook a supporter for a detractor and belittled him accordingly, the CNN reporter Kaidan Collins sent a tweet: "President Trump called and left a voicemail apologizing to the man he mocked as overweight, a White House official says. He confused him for a protester last night in New Hampshire. 'That guy's got a serious weight problem,' Trump said. 'Go home. Start exercising.'"

Soon, however, Collins tweeted a follow-up: "Correction: Trump did not apologize, a White House official tells me. He phoned the supporter, left him a message thanking him for his support, but did not use the words 'sorry' or 'apologize.'"

That the official felt the need to issue this clarification was telling. And it warned of an array of anti-atonements to come. In September, Trump tweeted that Hurricane Dorian, the storm then wreaking havoc in the Bahamas, would reach the shores of Alabama. This was incorrect. A different president might have acknowledged the mistake and moved on.



# The K-W-L Reading Strategy

## Know Now

- apologies are complicated
- public figures have a strange relationship with apologies

## Want to Know

- what is behind the change in apology style?
- what are some examples of non-apologies?

## Learned

- apologies are seen as a sign of weakness
- apologies are connected to empathy

# SQ3R Strategy

Robinson, F. P. (1946). *Effective study* (2nd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

# Survey Question Read Recall Review



# Survey Question **Read** Recall Review

# Survey

Flip through the text.  
Author? Date? Sections?  
Headings? Lists?  
Visuals? Captions?  
Length?

# Survey Question

What are you expecting  
to learn from this text?  
Are there questions you  
are trying to answer?

# Survey Question **Read** Recall Review

Do something with the information you got out of the text. Present, write, discuss, test, summarize, etc.

# Recall Review



# Text Structure

Source: Mauraanen, A. (1992). Reference in Academic Rhetoric: A Contrastive Study of Finnish and English Writing

# Are Finnish and English academic texts different?

| Finnish                      | English |
|------------------------------|---------|
| General Rhetorical Structure |         |
|                              |         |
| Information Placement        |         |
|                              |         |
| Text and Meta-text           |         |
|                              |         |

# Are Finnish and English academic texts different?

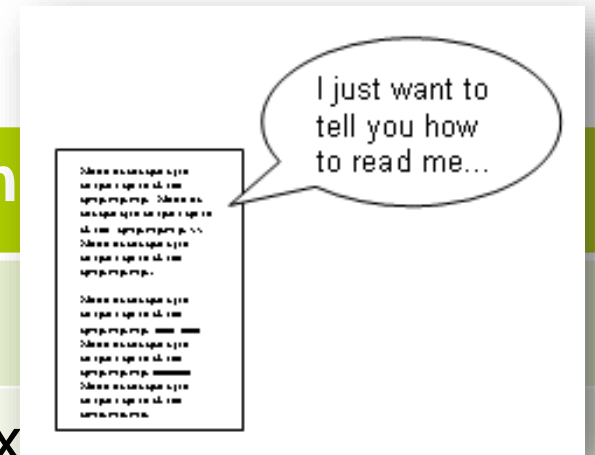
| Finnish                      | English  |
|------------------------------|----------|
| General Rhetorical Structure |          |
| implicit                     | explicit |
| Information Placement        |          |
|                              |          |
| Text and Meta-text           |          |
|                              |          |

# Are Finnish and English academic texts different?

| Finnish   | English  |
|---|--|
| <b>General Rhetorical Structure</b>                                       |  |
| implicit  | explicit   |
| <b>Information Placement</b>  |  |
| starts from a distance and makes its way to the main point toward the end | starts with important points and repeats them throughout |
| <b>Text and Meta-text</b>   |  |
|   |  |

# Are Finnish and English academic texts different?

| Finnish   | English  |
|---|--|
| <b>General Rhetorical Structure</b>                                       |  |
| implicit  | explicit   |
| <b>Information Placement</b>  |  |
| starts from a distance and makes its way to the main point toward the end | starts with important points and repeats them throughout |
| <b>Text and Meta-text</b>   |  |
| Less text about text  | More text about text                                     |





## **(a non-American perspective)**

According to Dirk Siepmann, “German texts, by virtue of their digressiveness, are versatile and multi-faceted, whereas Anglo-Saxon writing is repetitive and colourless. Equally, German text structure might be likened metaphorically to that of a ‘staircase’ or ‘spiral’ leading the writer through even more complex stages of reasoning to the conclusion. Viewed from this perspective, English academic style will appear like a walk over a perfectly flat country with no attempt to venture into mountainous territory.”

Siepmann, Dirk. “Academic Writing and Culture: An Overview of Differences Between English, French, and German.” *Meta*, vol. 51, No. 1, 2006, pp. 131-150.

## (a non-American perspective)

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Siepmann, Dirk. “Academic Writing and Culture: An Overview of Differences Between English, French, and German.” *Meta*, vol. 51, No. 1, 2006, pp. 131-150.

# Signposting



# Signposting

more info

cause/result

example

emphasis

contrast

similarity

time period

summary

conclusion





Source: Golder, M. (2016). Far Right Parties in Europe. *Annual Review Of Political Science*, 19(1), 477-497.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-042814-012441>

Although some find that unemployment helps far right parties, ...

*What comes next? Go to the next slide for a hint.*

Source: Golder, M. (2016). Far Right Parties in Europe. *Annual Review Of Political Science*, 19(1), 477-497.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-042814-012441>

***Although*** some find that unemployment helps far right parties, ...

*What comes next? Go to the next slide for the answer.*

Source: Golder, M. (2016). Far Right Parties in Europe. *Annual Review Of Political Science*, 19(1), 477-497.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-042814-012441>

***Although*** some find that unemployment helps far right parties, **most find that it either has no effect or hurts them.**

This procedure does not develop a *concept* of a blurg, though. The term 'blurg' does not get associated with any *way of thinking* of the three things. We have simply labeled those things as 'blurg' without attaching any general meaning to the label. Also, even if some procedure like this could assign some concept to an application, the concept thereby applies only to the things that we have singled out. Yet generally our concepts are not restricted in that way. For instance, there are constantly new and previously unknown things to which our concept of blue applies – they are new blue things. Clearly we did not single them out in setting up our concept of blue. So a 'blurg'-like specification of a concept's application would not explain why the concept of blue applies to the new things.

Source: Conee, E., & Sider, T. (2005). *Riddles of Existence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

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**What other tools can I  
use to help me work  
with texts?**



Academic Word List (570 most  
common words in academic texts)

Rewordify

Key Word Extractor

# [Sample text]

The history of pellagra illustrates the human cost of basing social and economic policy on mistaken inferences from correlational studies. This is not to say that we should never use correlational evidence. Quite the contrary. In many instances, it is all we have to work with, and in some cases, it is all we need (for instance, when prediction, rather than determination of cause, is the goal). Scientists often have to use incomplete knowledge to solve problems. The important thing is that we approach correlational evidence with a certain skepticism. Examples such as the pellagra–sewage case occur with considerable frequency in all areas of psychology. The example illustrates what is sometimes termed the third-variable problem: the fact that the correlation between the two variables—in this case, pellagra incidence and sewage conditions—may not indicate a direct causal path between them but may arise because both variables are related to a third variable that has not even been measured. Pellagra incidence is related to SES (and to diet—the real causal variable) and SES is also related to sewer- age quality. Correlations like that between sewage and pellagra are often termed spurious correlations: correlations that arise not because a causal link exists between the two variables that are measured, but because both variables are related to a third variable. Let's consider a more contemporary example. For decades, debates have raged over the relative efficacy of public and private schools. Some of the conclusions drawn in this debate vividly demonstrate the perils of inferring causation from correlational evidence. The question of the efficacy of private versus public schools is an empirical problem that can be attacked with the investigative methods of the social sciences. This is not to imply that it is an easy problem, only that it is a scientific problem, potentially solvable. All advocates of the superiority of private schools implicitly recognize this, because at the crux of their arguments is an empirical fact: Student achievement in private schools exceeds that in public schools. This fact is not in dispute—educational statistics are plentiful and largely consistent across various studies. The problem is the use of these achievement data to conclude that the education received in private schools causes the superior test scores. The outcome of educational testing is a function of many different variables, all of which are correlated. In order to evaluate the relative efficacy of public schools and private schools, we need more complex statistics than merely the relationship between the type of school attended and school achievement. For example, educational achievement is related to many different indicators of family background, such as parental education, parental occupation, SES, the number of books in the home, and other factors. These characteristics are also related to the probability of sending a child to a private school. Thus, family background is a potential third variable that may affect the relationship between academic achievement and the type of school. In short, the relationship may have nothing to do with the effectiveness of private schools but may be the result of the fact that economically advantaged children do better academically and are more likely to attend private schools.

Source: Conrad, P., & Schneider, J. (1992). *Deviance and Medicalization: From Badness to Sickness*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

| Current profile |        |
|-----------------|--------|
| %               | Cumul. |
| 75.99           | 75.99  |
| 3.02            | 79.01  |
| 13.23           | 92.24  |
| 7.75            | 100.00 |

the history of pellagra illustrates the human cost of basing social and economic policy on mistaken inferences from correlational studies this is not to say that we should never use correlational evidence quite the contrary in many instances it is all we have to work with and in some cases it is all we need for instance when prediction rather than determination of cause is the goal scientists often have to use incomplete knowledge to solve problems the important thing is that we approach correlational evidence with a certain skepticism examples such as the pellagra sewage case occur with considerable frequency in all areas of psychology the example illustrates what is sometimes termed the third variable problem the fact that the correlation between the two variables in this case pellagra incidence and sewage conditions may not indicate a direct causal path between them but may arise because both variables are related to a third variable that has not even been measured pellegra incidence is related to ses and to diet the real causal variable and ses is also related to sewer age quality correlations like that between sewage and pellagra are often termed spurious correlations correlations that arise not because a causal link exists between the two variables that are measured but because both variables are related to a third variable let consider a more contemporary example for decades debates have raged over the relative efficacy of public and private schools some of the conclusions drawn in this debate vividly demonstrate the perils of inferring causation from correlational evidence the question of the efficacy of private versus public schools is an empirical problem that can be attacked with the investigative methods of the social sciences this is not to imply that it is an easy problem only that it is a scientific problem potentially solvable all advocates of the superiority of private schools implicitly recognize this because at the crux of their arguments is an empirical fact student achievement in private schools exceeds that in public schools this fact is

are **related** to a third variable. Let's consider a more contemporary example. For decades, debates have **raged** over the relative efficacy of public and private schools. Some of the conclusions drawn in this debate **vividly demonstrate** the **perils** of **inferring causation** from correlational evidence. The question of the efficacy of private versus public schools is an empirical problem that can be attacked with the investigative methods of the social sciences. This is not to imply that it is an easy problem, only that it is a scientific problem, potentially solvable. All advocates of the **superiority** of private schools **implicitly** recognize this, because at the **crux of** their arguments is an empirical fact: Student achievement in private schools **exceeds** that in public schools. This fact is not in dispute--educational statistics are **plentiful** and largely consistent across various studies. The problem is the use of these achievement data to conclude that the education received in private schools causes the superior test scores. The outcome of educational testing is a function of many different variables, all of which are correlated. In order to evaluate the relative efficacy of public schools and private schools, we need more complex statistics than merely the relationship between the type of school attended and school achievement. For

**raged** screamed and acted violently  
**vividly** clearly and colorfully  
**demonstrate** (show or prove)  
**perils** dangers  
**inferring** guessing (based on what was known)  
**causation** (when one thing definitely causes another)  
**superiority** (quality of being better than everything else)  
**implicitly** completely/in a hinting way  
**crux of** most important part of  
**exceeds** goes beyond  
**plentiful** (existing in very large amounts)

## Key Word Extractor

- (1) 245614.00 relation
- (2) 3559.61 efficacy
- (3) 1544.74 causal
- (4) 346.32 correlate
- (5) 117.03 achieve
- (6) 104.65 private
- (7) 100.79 vary
- (8) 45.16 evidence
- (9) 43.11 science
- (10) 41.40 educate
- (11) 39.27 school
- (12) 33.43 example
- (13) 26.25 cause

# What about taking notes?



# (How) Do you take notes?

What language do you use?

How do you choose what to write down/type?

Do you use the exact words from the text/lecture, or your own words?

Do you look at your notes again later?



# The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking



**Pam A. Mueller<sup>1</sup> and Daniel M. Oppenheimer<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Princeton University and <sup>2</sup>University of California, Los Angeles

## Abstract

Taking notes on laptops rather than in longhand is increasingly common. Many researchers have suggested that laptop note taking is less effective than longhand note taking for learning. Prior studies have primarily focused on students' capacity for multitasking and distraction when using laptops. The present research suggests that even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing. In three studies, we found that students who took notes on laptops performed worse on conceptual questions than students who took notes longhand. We show that whereas taking more notes can be beneficial, laptop note takers' tendency to transcribe lectures verbatim rather than processing information and reframing it in their own words is detrimental to learning.



What are the overall implications of this study?

What were the findings regarding factual vs. conceptual recall?

Was taking notes verbatim helpful?

What happened when students were told NOT to take notes verbatim?

# Skimming

**English texts are structured predictably. By skimming the text, you can find the information you need.**



**Read only the subheadings so you can focus on the information you need.**

**Read only the first sentence (or first and last sentences) of each paragraph.**

**Read only the first and last paragraphs.**

**Scan the text for a particular word, or words.**



A few take-  
home  
messages



Try out a reading method

- K-W-L? SQ3R?

Let English texts tell you how to read them

- Structure & signposting

Take notes! By hand, even!

Don't be afraid to skim

**Remember: reading is a skill and it can be improved with practice.**



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