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Writing

CHECKLIST / WRITING-TO-THINK MINDSET

- Separate the writer from the critic and never be both at the same time.
- Never be a copy editor for a writing-to-think exercise.
- Re-envision your ideas and thoughts: don't redraft your language or structure.

CHECKLIST / WRITING-TO-THINK APPROACH

- Use free writing to be free of constraints or conventions.
- Use directed writing to help with where to start, and to ask difficult questions.
- Remember that adapting the seven core questions requires critical thinking.
- Don't try to answer the questions: explore your thoughts.
- Note down further questions as these are avenues of thought that your brain has discovered.

CHECKLIST / FINDING TIME

- Use writing-to-think to save time by consolidating knowledge and focusing research.
- Schedule a session regularly, or fit a session into a daily commute.

CHECKLIST / DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE

- Be aware that no one is critiquing your writing-to-think exercises.
- Remember the goal isn't 'right' answers.
- Find confidence to think about a topic—then write those thoughts down.

CHECKLIST / FORGET THE QUALITY OF THE WRITING

- Be aware that the quality of your writing is largely irrelevant.
- Use writing-to-think to practise your writing.
- Decide which language to use for writing-to-think exercises, remembering the benefits of using your language of instruction.

Reading

CHECKLIST / CONTEXT—SITUATE IN CONTEXT

- Understand the topic of that week in your overall area of study and each text within that topic.
- Collate your reading list into a document which is clearly laid out and easy to access.
- Include full citation for ease of later referencing.
- Estimate the time you have available for reading.

CHECKLIST / BREADTH—SKIM, SEARCH, SELECT

- Read the title, abstract (if available), table of contents, headings, and sub-headings, and collate key information into your central document.
- Look for key words and language signposts and look up definitions of any words (especially key-words) you don't understand.
- Read the introduction and conclusion (or just skim depending on length) to understand the main claim or argument and collate this into your central document.
- Identify the texts which warrant closer reading given the time available.

CHECKLIST / DEPTH—STUDY IN DEPTH AND SUM-UP

- When studying in depth, be selective: you don't necessarily have to read the entire text in depth.
- Adopt a flexible approach: you may skip back and forth within the text, or skip over segments you feel are not as relevant as others.
- Remember the elements to active reading which are most explicitly deployed at this stage: comprehend, analyse, interpret.

CHECKLIST / NOTE-TAKING FOR ACTIVE READING

- Context and breadth notes are more factual and information based, and include summaries.
- Depth notes ask questions of the text—this is a crucial element in active reading.
- Scribble notes, comments, and questions on the text but avoid summarizing: this was done at the breadth stage
- Sum-up notes should comprise your current state of knowledge and your ongoing questions, gaps, or inconsistencies which persist.

CHECKLIST / ALLOCATING TIME AND ACHIEVING FOCUS FOR ACTIVE READING

- Allocate dedicated reading blocks.
- Choose a venue with few distractions.
- Turn your phone and Wi-Fi off for those reading blocks.
- Have a plan already decided for what you will read (are you at the breadth stage, or the depth stage?).
- Finish a full text in one sitting if possible (with rest breaks if necessary, but not to check emails or social media).
- Use the CBD active reading strategy for selective reading.

CHECKLIST / IMPROVING READING ACCURACY

- Improve reading proficiency with university support/courses if needed.
- Focus on the overall argument so as not to misinterpret.
- Focus on the detailed words and phrases so as not to miscomprehend.

CHECKLIST / APPROACHING DIFFICULT TEXTS

- Remember that the original audience may not be students, but an academic's own colleagues.
- Don't give up on reading—persevere.
- Don't feel you have to achieve 100 % understanding from every reading.
- Trust that, over time, this will become easier.

CHECKLIST / EFFECTIVE SCREEN READING

- Embrace the benefits of screen reading (such as search functionality, and 'clickable' definitions of key words in the case of enhanced eBooks).
- However, be aware of times these may impact studying in depth.
- Take breaks to rest your eyes and make use of background light settings on e-readers.
- Adopt a good posture.

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Listening

CHECKLIST / HEARING AND COMPREHENSION

- Politely ask a speaker to be louder or slower to enable you to hear and comprehend.
- Sit closer to the speaker.
- Don't give up on listening to someone with an accent—your brain will get used to it.
- If hearing is an ongoing problem, get checked by a professional.

CHECKLIST / MAINTAINING ATTENTION

- Recall your motivation for listening: internal or external.
- Quieten your mind, and give yourself permission to focus.
- Give yourself a break if you are dealing with a serious situation affecting your attention.

CHECKLIST / AVOIDING DISTRACTION

- Make sure you are 100 per cent in that specific space and time.
- Turn off your phone and Wi-Fi so that there are no distractions, and your brain can stop scanning.

CHECKLIST / ACHIEVING EXTENDED FOCUS

- Make use of other tools as well as listening.
- Keep practising active listening for extended periods.

CHECKLIST / SELECTIVE ANALYSIS TO AVOID OVERLOAD

- Use note-taking to maintain concentration, but not to write down everything being said.
- Look for language signposts and non-verbal cues such as body language to contribute to a fuller meaning of what we are listening to.
- Be confident to be selective about what we are listening to, in order to be able to process and analyse.

CHECKLIST / PREPARATION FOR FAST COMPREHENSION

- Use the pre-reading and preparation to familiarize yourself with key phrases and concepts so you can comprehend these easily when you hear them.
- Build foundational knowledge throughout the semester so that you can immediately analyse and interpret when such knowledge is introduced with more complexity later.

CHECKLIST / AN OPEN-MINDED APPROACH

- Listen with an open-mind, not with the aim of only identifying flaws.

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Speaking

CHECKLIST / WHAT TO SAY?

- What you say should be motivated by a desire to improve thinking, not to improve your image.
- Try to stay focused, and have the confidence to let a thought be unfinished and still spoken.
- Use whatever words you have available, don't be constrained by language fluency.

CHECKLIST / HOW TO SAY IT?

- Speak loud enough to be heard.
- Articulate, use appropriate pace and pauses to be comprehended.
- Use short, clear phrases and sentences which are easily understood: don't try to be overly complex.
- Engage the audience and balance assertiveness to welcome feedback.

CHECKLIST / WHEN TO SPEAK?

- Engage with class activities which are designed to help build your confidence speaking.
- Embrace speaking to help refine your thoughts, not simply to communicate fully-developed ideas.
- Speak to ask questions as this is a sign that your brain is engaged and thinking.

CHECKLIST / COPING WITH FEEDBACK AND CRITIQUE

- Separate yourself from your ideas.
- Stand up for yourself if someone attacks you, instead of critiquing your thinking.
- Seek out psychologically safe environments and opportunities to speak.

CHECKLIST / OVERCOMING LACK OF CONFIDENCE

- Seek support from your lecturers, tutors, and colleagues.
- Speak early in the semester and start small.
- Acknowledge your nerves and persevere if they are impacting your articulation.
- Remind yourself that you are speaking-to-think, not to get it 'right'.
- Push your comfort zones and be courageous.

CHECKLIST / DEALING WITH SPECIFIC ANXIETIES

- Ensure your tutor or lecturer is aware and can adjust expectations and your environment.
- Seek support from disability services if necessary.
- Prioritize other tools if speaking is impossible.

CHECKLIST / KEEPING EMOTION 'IN CHECK'

- Be aware of our emotional response but don't allow it to dominate.
- Seek out the idea, thought, or reasoning behind the emotional response.
- Breathe deeply, and slowly to release emotion before speaking.

CHECKLIST / USING AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO SPEAK

- Make the most of opportunities offered to you in lectures or tutorials.
- Create opportunities by forming discussion groups of diverse students.
- Politely push back if you are being interrupted so that you can finish vocalizing your thought.

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Thinking

CHECKLIST / HOW TO PREPARE

- Suspend your ego and judgement.
- Reject the obvious.
- Declutter your mind.

CHECKLIST / UNDERTAKING A THINKING SESSION

- Ask naïve questions.
- Avoid routine patterns of thought.
- Be persistent.
- Embrace failure and remain optimistic.
- Use a distract-to-focus technique.

CHECKLIST / RECORDING OUR THOUGHTS

- Recording your thoughts should happen after, not during, a thinking session.
- Leave some time afterwards before attempting to record your thoughts.
- You can use a stream of consciousness approach or a categorized approach, or develop your own approach.
- Recording thoughts is often done in writing, but could also be a voice recording.

CHECKLIST / RECORDING OUR THOUGHTS

- Return to your thoughts at a later time.
- You may want to read (or listen to) your recorded thoughts to prompt further thoughts.
- Never consider your job of thinking, or improving thinking, finished.

CHECKLIST / OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO THINKING

- Schedule dedicated writing and thinking days—and don't check emails or social media on these days.
- Practise dedicated thinking sessions, and increase the length of these to train your brain.
- Use apps to reduce your time on social media.
- Accept that certainty is not required and, especially at university, it can limit your mind to new thoughts and possibilities.
- Be aware of cognitive biases and attempt to uncover your subconscious bias.