

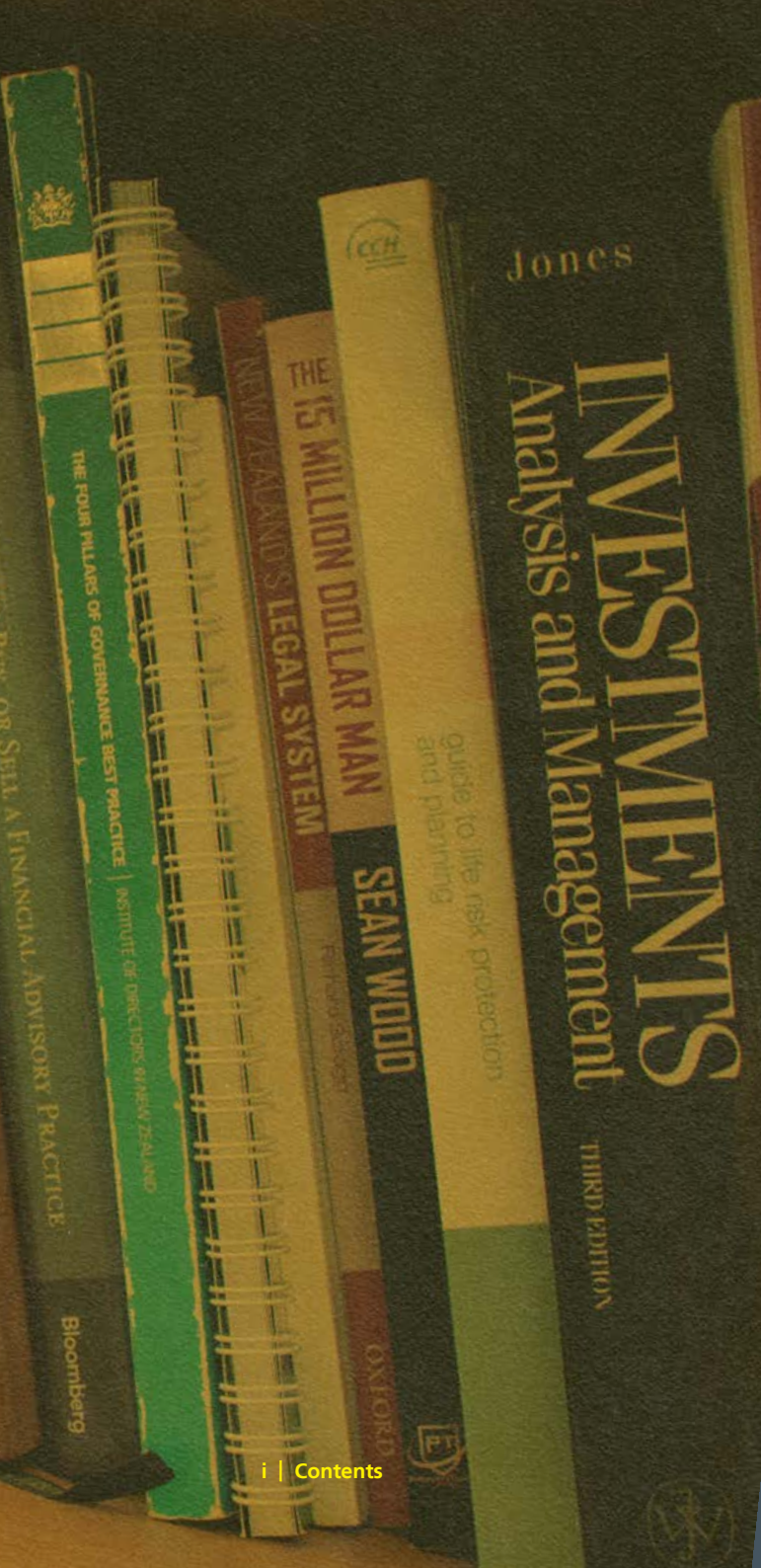


Strategi  
*Institute*

# Strategies for Study

ADVICE YOU CAN  
PROFIT FROM

Helping you prepare  
for study success



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# INTRODUCTION

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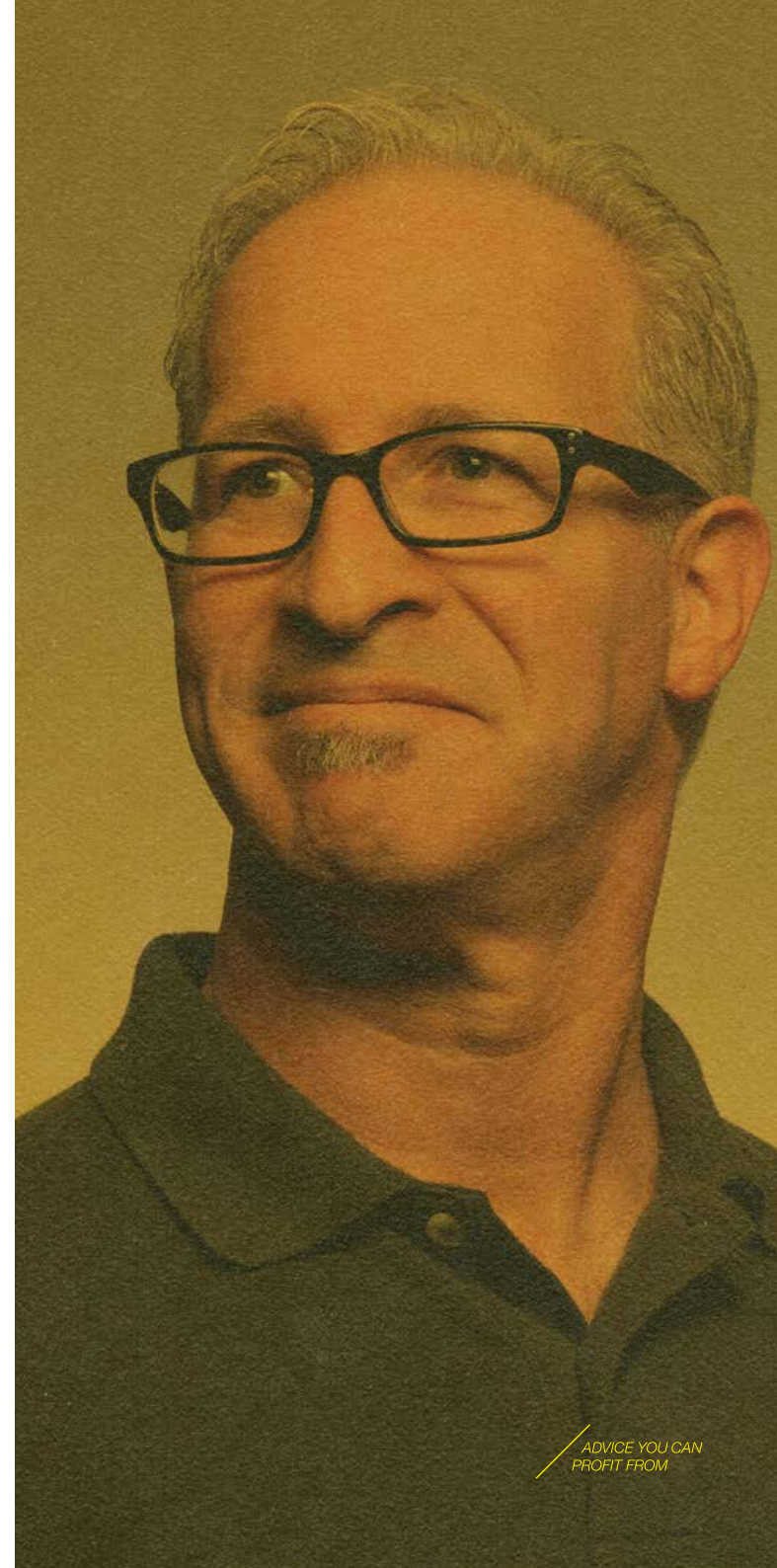
## Advice for study success

*Strategi Institute* recognises that it may have been a number of years since some within the industry last engaged in any kind of formal study, and we know how much anxiety that can cause.

To help put you at ease, here is some advice and guidance on a variety of skills and methods that you might find useful. It is aimed at those who are new to formal study, or who have not experienced it for some time. We hope you find it beneficial.

Your study is about learning to be competent in the prescribed areas. It has been designed to be as relevant as possible to your role as a financial services industry participant. Be assured it is not laden with cunning traps designed to test your memory retention. Whether or not you have recently done any studying, we hope you will find your training very user friendly.

The strategies outlined are intended to help you overcome any challenges.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Advice within this guide

- Developing the right study habits will help make your study experience as stress-free as possible and maximise your chances of success.
- Assignments are an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding and your ability to apply your knowledge.
- Skim reading and/or search reading can help you maximise the information you can absorb in the minimum amount of time.



# PREPARE YOURSELF TO SUCCEED

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**Try to develop and appreciate the following habits:**

## Use highlighters

Don't be afraid if you find at first that you have to read key points more than once before they stay in your memory. Use a highlighter pen to make key phrases stand out, then go back and re-read them. You will find as you progress that information will be retained more easily.

## Write notes in your training material

Most of us were told as children not to scribble in our books. But, if you can get over this, you will find that your notes become much more meaningful when you look back on them long after the event is over. If you are using electronic training material, then use the various tools to make notes or highlight points.

## Negotiate support

At work and at home. People who you spend your time with will need to give you time and space to study. What can you offer in return? Negotiating and agreeing a realistic timetable for your study can significantly reduce your stress levels.

## Find a comfort zone

Not everyone has a home office - but somewhere quiet, airy and well lit, with a comfortable chair and plenty of desk/table space is invaluable.

## Keep it regular

Most students find that establishing a routine is very important both for themselves and for those around them. Diarising specific evenings, or parts of the weekend, every week is easy for everyone to remember and keep to. Your friends and family will find it easier to help you stick to your commitments by not inviting you to events if they know you're not available on certain evenings and times at weekends. Some financial advisers like to get together for an early morning study group once a week. This gives them a chance to discuss the questions and bounce around concepts. Often, product provider or head group BDMs will be happy to attend and coordinate these study sessions.

## Quit while you're ahead

Always leave your study wanting to go on a bit. Never carry on until you're so tired or exhausted that it becomes a chore. Work out the length of your concentration span and only study for that length of time. As you progress, so will the length of your concentration span.



## Write things down

Always carry a notebook or your phone. Brilliant ideas have a terrible habit of coming in the middle of a lunch break or at four in the morning, and evaporating the minute you get to your desk.

## Discover your key productivity periods and places

Morning, afternoon, or evening? Find spaces where you can be the most focussed and productive. Prioritise these for your most difficult study challenges. Ask yourself what time of day you find it easiest to work, and in what environment? How long can you concentrate without needing a break? Then plan your work accordingly.

## Write out your goals and expected time commitments

This will be helpful in avoiding stress and over-scheduling yourself. As a rule of thumb, one NZQA credit is approximately equivalent to ten hours of learning. This doesn't only mean classroom-based time – it includes reading, research, discussion, learning from others, etc.

## Develop an awareness of how you learn

Or try to recall how you have learned best in the past; this will help you focus your energies in the most productive way, and alert you to areas where you may need help (e.g. speaking, writing, math, testing, etc).

## Exchange ideas

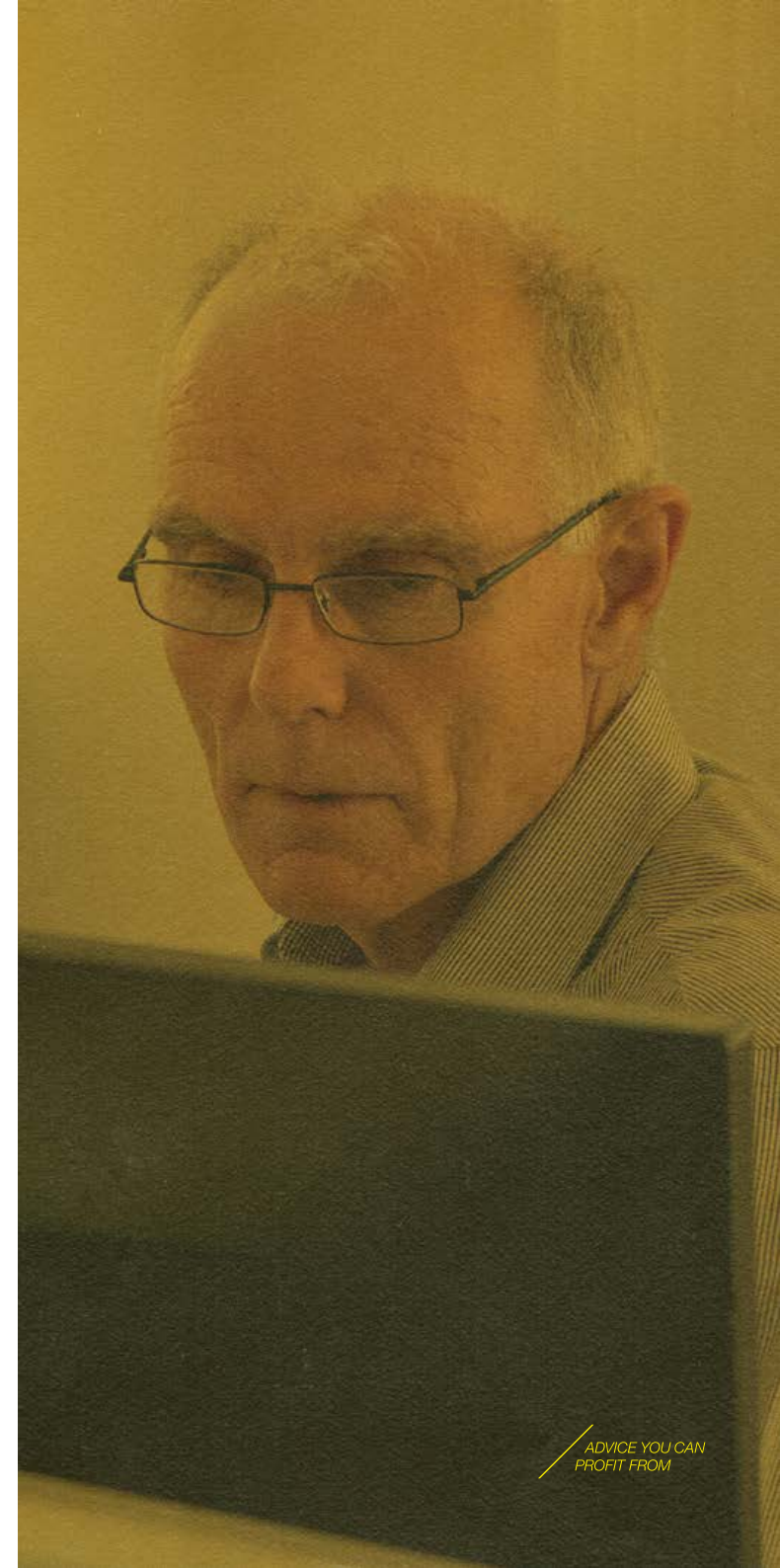
Discussing your work and ideas, sharing notes and reading each other's work is quite acceptable, (plagiarism isn't) and understanding it is essential. Working with others can help you to pinpoint what is expected of you academically.



## Concentration tips

The art or practice of concentration is to eliminate distraction and focus on the task at hand. If you find that you read through material and suddenly discover that you have no idea what you've just read, or if you attend classroom sessions and have difficulty paying attention to what is being said, these tips may help:

- Avoid daydreaming by asking yourself questions about the material as you study it.
- Before the start of a session look over the notes from the previous one.
- Pre-read the course material so that you can anticipate the main ideas that the trainer will cover.
- Show outward interest during the session (attentive expression and posture) to motivate internal interest.
- Resist distractions by sitting in front of the room and by focusing on the trainer through listening and note taking.



# COMPLETING ASSIGNMENTS

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Assignments are an integral part of your learning. It is through the assignments that the information you have gleaned from the course material will really start to take on personal relevance. The purpose of assignments is to help you consolidate what you have learned from the course and associated material.

## Writing assignments

When you first read the assignment questions, you may think there is more than one possible interpretation. You can contact the course trainer, your assessor, the Radar online chat system, or *Strategi Institute* to check your interpretation if you feel the question is ambiguous. In cases where there is a Q&A format, there is often an example completed to help you understand the context of the question.

When completing your assignments, you can always create a first draft of your answers, put them aside for a day or two, and then go back to it. Go through your answers carefully to check that your work says what you intended it to say, and that it is free from spelling and grammatical errors.

Note that your assignments are not an English language test, nor of your ability to format documents. However, your work should be professionally presented as if it was prepared for a client.

## Chunk out your study time, and work a plan

Every journey starts with the first step. When you look at the whole project it often feels too big, or too overwhelming. So, break it into small pieces and you can easily get a grip on just how much work you need to invest each day.

## Ask yourself: “When is the assignment or exam due? How many weeks have I got?”

Work backwards from the final date, cutting some slack for days off, or times when you’re too busy to work. Also leave a realistic chunk of time for review or editing (if it’s an assignment) at the end. If you start early enough you’ll be delighted how surprisingly little time is needed per day. In one quick stroke, your thinking changes from ‘This is too much’ to ‘I can do this!’

## Develop a 'Do it NOW' attitude

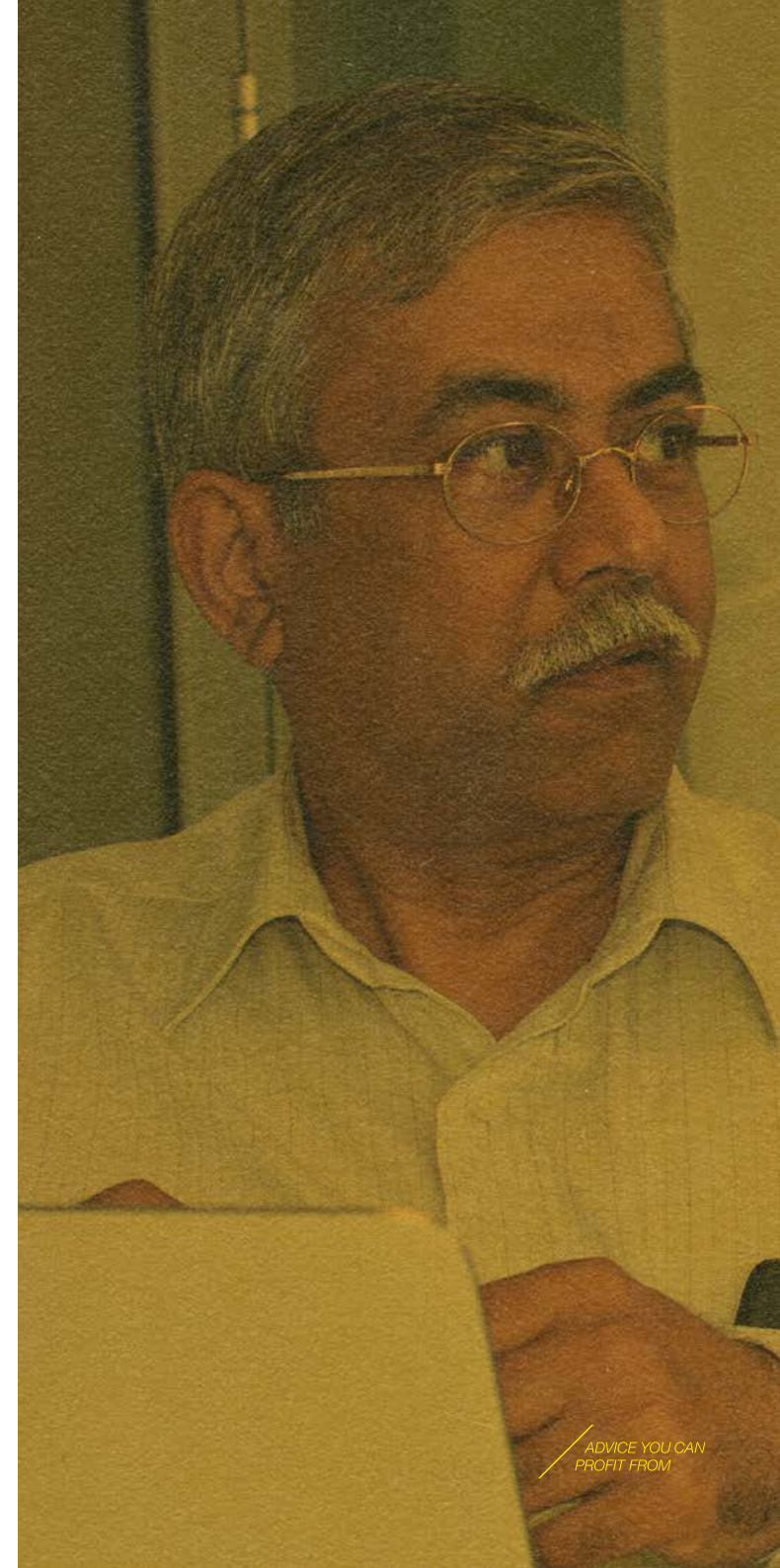
Instead of thinking about what you'd like to do - get started. Create momentum, make the first move, and the rest will follow. Try the following quote on your bathroom wall: 'If I do today what others won't, I'll have tomorrow what others don't.'

## Learn to say 'no'

If you can politely say 'no' when asked to invest time into activities that don't match your goals, you consistently achieve more. Listen to your intuition – it will guide you.

## Eliminate clutter

Messy desk, house, bedroom, office, garage, car – it doesn't matter what it is. When things are lying around, your subconscious mind has to work harder to ignore the 'mind traffic' distractions; you become slower and less effective. Do yourself a favour – clear up your work space before you start (but don't let that be a procrastination device!), and then keep it going – put away as you go. The feeling of freedom is its own reward.



## Submitting your assignment

There are clear instructions provided with your training material, and in Radar's online help guide, to help you manage the process of correctly submitting your assignments. Follow the instructions and you should not have any difficulty. If you do run into problems, use Radar's online chat to get help. We suggest you complete your assignments as soon as you can, when your training material is fresh in your mind.

## Feedback on your assignment

When you receive your assignment back, your first glance will inevitably be at the outcome – Competent or Not Yet Competent (NYC). Yes, it is important, but there may also be comments from the marker that will be of benefit to you in understanding your strengths and any areas for development. Your marker will also highlight any areas where rework is needed and may provide comments to point you in the right direction.

If you have any questions, or would like further advice, you can email us at [info@strategi.ac.nz](mailto:info@strategi.ac.nz).



# READING STRATEGIES

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**Here are two types of reading strategy that you might like to try:**

## **Search reading**

Search reading consists of running your eye over the page(s) looking out for words which signal discussion of your questions. When you find such a word, you stop and read more closely the surrounding paragraphs and take notes as needed. You may not bother about the rest of the text.

Don't be afraid to search read: your time is too precious to allow you to read every word of every book or article. You are in charge, and you can use books and articles as you will. If you don't, you may find yourself swamped by a mass of information you cannot retain or use, and that depresses you and makes you feel inadequate. So, you are in charge. That means really in charge, with an idea of where you want to go and what you want from a book or an article.

If the questions are not already formed in your mind, (as part of a plan for an assignment topic, for instance), you will need to go through the survey stage. It is worth doing as it will save you time in the end. The important thing is to have some questions you want ideas about.

## Skim reading

Skim reading consists of running your eye over the page as a whole, taking in key words that indicate what the paragraphs are about. You can use the skim reading technique for rapidly getting the 'meat' out of a book. Skim reading is used in conjunction with search reading, as, while you skim, you may find a section that you need to read more closely. The French call it 'diagonal reading', but the idea is the same - you run your eye in somewhat random fashion over the page looking for signposts.

Paragraphs are very important for skim reading, as the eye is drawn to the first sentence of a paragraph, hoping to find a signpost to the content of the paragraph. The last sentence of a paragraph may also be significant for the skim reader. (That tells us something about the role of paragraphs in assignment/report writing.)

The skim reader also makes maximum use of chapter headings, sub-headings, quotations and tables, all of which contain a lot of information in readily accessible form. But skim reading is at its most useful when you have questions you are seeking ideas about. It is worth spending a little time, before starting to skim read, to formulate your questions (one may be enough, or you may have several).

# SUMMARY

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Following the strategies and recommendations outlined, can assist you to structure an effective approach to your study. This will help minimise your stress at the thought of 'going back to school' and to increase your chances of success.

Remember, *Strategi Institute* is here to help you get through your study, not to fail you. Throughout, and after your study, we are available through the Radar online chat facility, by email and by phone, to answer your questions and point you in the right direction.





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