

Reading Strategies

Skim reading

Skimming occurs when you look quickly over a large piece of reading to get the general idea. You might skim read because you do not have time to read every word, and are just looking for the main points quickly. Skimming can help you decide which things to read in more detail. Some examples of skimming include:

- an article in a magazine, newspaper or journal, or a chapter in a book before you decide to read it
- a newspaper or magazine, to find something in it that interests you
- a book, before you borrow or buy it

Skim reading involves:

- moving your eyes quickly
- using clues such as diagrams, charts, headings and sub headings and captions
- reading topic sentences to give you the main idea of a paragraph
- reading the introduction and conclusion
- not focusing on words or parts you do not understand

The advantages of skimming

- It will save you time
- It will focus your reading
- It will help you decide if it is relevant



Scan reading

Scanning is used when you are looking for the answer to a specific question or trying to locate a specific piece of information in a text. Some examples of scanning include:

- the contents or the index of a book or magazine, to find the section you want
- a newspaper article, to find out when, where, why or how something happened

TIP: Scanning is used when you want to find the answer quickly and easily, so you do not read every word. Before scanning think about the possible forms the answer might take. For example, if you are going to read an article to find out where something happened, you will be looking for place names such as countries or cities, and focusing on words with capital letters to make finding the answer easier.

Scanning involves:

- having words in mind related to the relevant topic and moving your eyes quickly to find the answer
- thinking about where the answer may be - at the beginning, middle or end of a text
- working quickly without getting interested in other parts of the text which are not related to your question
- slowing down and reading more carefully when you get to the part that might have the answer



Reading in detail

Once you have scanned or skimmed to identify the sections of the text that you need to focus on more deeply, you can begin to read carefully and slowly making sure that you really understand what the writer means.

It is also important to ask yourself questions as you are reading. For example: What point is the author trying to make here? How does this relate to what I have read before? Which part of this passage is particularly relevant to my task? This will help you to read critically.

Reading difficult texts

There may be times, particularly in the early stages of your course, when you will come across difficult texts or are overwhelmed by the amount of reading required. Utilising some of the reading strategies above is the first step. Even though you do not understand every word, skim read to get the main point, focusing on key sections such as the introduction, conclusion and topic sentences.

TIPS:

- If you have identified an important section that is difficult to follow - mark it for later review
- Do not stop reading when you come across a difficult word - keep reading as it may well be defined or clarified further on in the sentence or paragraph
- Stop reading after a difficult section and reflect and review, try writing in your own words what you have understood
- Create your own word bank of discipline specific vocabulary
- Organise your notes by connecting ideas

Make a list of questions and ask other students, your educator or find a simpler text on the same topic

