

Skimming & Scanning

— Introduction —

Skimming and scanning are reading techniques that use rapid eye movement and keywords to move quickly through text for slightly different purposes.

— Skimming —

Skimming is reading rapidly in order to get a general overview of the material. Skimming tells you what general information is within a section.

— Scanning —

Scanning is reading rapidly in order to find specific facts. Scanning helps you locate a particular fact.

Skimming to save time:

Skimming can save you hours of laborious reading. However, it is not

always the most appropriate way to read. It is very useful as a preview to a more detailed reading or when reviewing a selection heavy in content. Use skimming to overview your textbook chapters or to review for a test. Use skimming to decide if you need to read something at all.

Steps of Skimming:

In general, follow these steps:

- Read the table of contents or chapter overview to learn the main divisions of ideas.
- Read the headings of charts and tables.
- Read the entire introductory paragraph and then the first and last sentence only of each following paragraph.
- For each paragraph, read only the first few words of each sentence or to locate the main idea.
- Stop and quickly read the sentences containing keywords indicated in boldface or italics.
- Resist the temptation to stop to read details you don't need.
- Read chapter summaries when provided.

Good Skimmers:

Good Skimmers do not skim everything at the same rate or give equal attention to everything. One should slow down in the following situations:

- When you skim topic sentences
- When you skim introductory & concluding paragraphs
- When you find an unfamiliar word
- When the material is very complicated

Scanning for research and study:

If after skimming you decide the material will be useful, go ahead and scan:

- know what you're looking for
- look for only keyword at a time
- When your eye catches one of your keywords read the surrounding material carefully

Scanning to Answer Questions:

Follow these steps:

- Read each question completely before starting to scan.

- look for answers to only one question at a time. Scan separately for each question.
- when you locate a keyword, read the surrounding text carefully to see if it is relevant.
- Re-read the question to determine if the answer you found answers this question.

Conclusion:

It can be concluded that Skimming and Scanning are two very different strategies for speed reading. They are each used for different purposes, and they are not meant to be used all the time. They are at the fast end of the speed-reading range, while studying is at the slow end.