Skimming and scanning

Skimming and scanning are important skills to help you to read effectively and efficiently. How we read in English depends on exactly what we are reading for. Skimming and scanning are two different speed-reading techniques which will help you to read a text quickly and to deal with a lot of material efficiently.

**Skimming** is a fast reading technique. Use it to obtain the gist of a piece of text. Skimming means that you rapidly move your eyes over the text in order to get the **main idea** or a **general overview** of the content.

Don't read the whole text word-for-word. Use as many clues as possible to give you some background information. There might be pictures or images related to the topic, or an eye-catching title. Let your eyes skim over the surface of the text and, whilst thinking about any clues you have found about the subject, look out for key words.

- ✓ Read the title, subtitles and subheading to find out what the text is about.
- ✓ Read the first paragraph/ introduction.
- ✓ Look at the illustrations to give you further information about the topic.
- ✓ Read the first and last sentence of each paragraph.
- ✓ Look at typographical clues: words in **bold**, *italics*, *underlined* or **highlighted** words.
- ✓ Don't read every word or every sentence. Let your eyes skim over the text, taking in key words.
- ✓ Continue to think about the meaning of the text.

**Scanning** is a fast reading technique. It's a way of reading to look for **specific information** in a text. You use this method if you look for a specific word, name, date, statistic, fact, place, number, etc. Move your finger or a pen across the text to help you scan. Scanning is also useful when studying or looking to find specific information from a book or an article quickly as there is not always time to read every word.

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