



# SKIMMING AND SCANNING

Reading Technique



# Scanning

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You can use the scanning technique to look up a phone number, read through the small ads in a newspaper, or for browsing television schedules, timetables, lists, catalogues or webpages for information. For these tasks you **don't need to read or understand every word.**

Scanning is also useful when you don't have time to read every word. This could be when you're studying or looking for specific information from a book or article and need to find it quickly. **Scanning is very useful when looking for specific information on an exam.**

# Tips for better scanning

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- Don't try to read every word. Instead let your eyes move quickly across the page until you find what you're looking for.
- Use clues on the page, such as headings and titles, to help you.
- In a dictionary or phone book, use the header words to help you scan. You can find these in bold type at the top of each page.
- If you're reading for study, start by thinking up or writing down some questions that you want to answer. Doing this can focus your mind and help you find the facts or information that you need more easily.
- Many texts list things in alphabetical order from A to Z. These include everyday materials, such as the phone book or indexes to books and catalogues.
- There are many ways to practise scanning skills. Try looking up a favourite recipe in the index of a cookbook, search for a plumber in your local Yellow Pages or scan webpages on the internet to find specific information.

# Skimming

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Skimming is a reading technique that can help you:

- read more quickly
- decide if the text is interesting and whether you should read it in more detail

You can use the skimming technique when you want to identify the main ideas in the text. **This is particularly helpful when you are taking an exam.**

# How is skimming different than scanning?

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The term skimming is often confused with scanning.

- You skim a text to obtain the **gist** - the overall sense - of a piece of writing. This can help you decide whether to read it more slowly and in more detail.
- You scan a text to obtain specific information. For example, to find a particular number in a telephone directory.

Sometimes you can use **both** reading methods. After you've skimmed a piece of text to decide whether it's of interest, you might then use scanning techniques to find specific information.

# How do you skim read?

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When you use the skimming technique you don't read the whole text word for word. You should 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 look out for **key words** while thinking about any clues you've found about the subject.

- Read the title, subtitles and subheadings to find out what the text is about.
- Look at the illustrations to give you more information about the topic.
- Read the first and last sentence of each paragraph.
- Don't read every word or every sentence. Let your eyes skim over the text and look out for key words.
- Continue to think about the meaning of the text.

# Why do “real” people skim and scan?

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After watching the video clip, list ways employees use skimming and scanning

- To find the subject matter they need
- To judge relevance
- To remind themselves which jobs still need to be done

## Exercise 1: The Big Scan

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There has been a murder in Sleazeville. Can you solve the mystery and find out who the murderer is and why they did it? You'll be working against the clock, so you'll have to scan the clues quickly before your time runs out.

[Play THE BIG SCAN](#)

[Click here for clue sheet](#)



## Exercise 2: What's Behind This Door?

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1. Log into Achieve3000.
2. Click on Search.
3. Type **What's Behind This Door** in the box.
4. Click on the link to **What's Behind This Door**.
5. Click on **Article**. You have 20 minutes to read the article and complete the **Activity**.