

# SKIMMING AND SCANNING

Skimming and scanning are two specific speed-reading techniques, which enable you to cover a vast amount of material very rapidly. These techniques are similar in process but different in purpose. Quickly "looking over" an article is neither skimming nor scanning. Both require specific steps to be followed.

- I. **SKIMMING** is a method of rapidly moving the eyes over text with the purpose of getting only the main ideas and a general overview of the content.
  - A. Skimming is useful in three different situations.
    - Pre-reading--Skimming is more thorough than simple previewing and can give a more accurate picture of text to be read later.
    - Reviewing--Skimming is useful for reviewing text already read.
    - Reading--Skimming is most often used for quickly reading material that, for any number of reasons, does not need more detailed attention.
  - B. Steps in skimming an article
    - Read the title--it is the shortest possible summary of the content.
    - Read the introduction or lead-in paragraph.
    - Read the first paragraph completely.
    - If there are subheadings, read each one, looking for relationships among them.
    - Read the first sentence of each remaining paragraph.
      - a. The main idea of most paragraphs appears in the first sentence.
      - b. If the author's pattern is to begin with a question or anecdote, you may find the last sentence more valuable.
  6. Dip into the text looking for:
    - a. Clue words that answer who, what, when, why, how
    - b. Proper nouns
    - c. Unusual words, especially if capitalized
    - d. Enumerations
    - e. Qualifying adjectives (best, worst, most, etc.)
    - f. Typographical cues--italics, boldface, underlining, asterisks, etc.
  7. Read the final paragraph completely.
  - C. Mastering the art of skimming effectively requires that you use it as frequently as possible.
  - D. Skimming can usually be accomplished at about 1000 words per minute.

- II. **SCANNING** rapidly covers a great deal of material in order to locate a specific fact or piece of information.
- A. Scanning is very useful for finding a specific name, date, statistic, or fact without reading the entire article.
- B. Steps in scanning an article.
- Keep in mind at all times what it is you are searching for. If you hold the image of the word or idea clearly in mind, it is likely to appear more clearly than the surrounding words.
  - Anticipate in what form the information is likely to appear - numbers, proper nouns, etc.
  - Analyze the organization of the content before starting to scan.
    - a. If material is familiar or fairly brief, you may be able to scan the entire article in a single search.
    - b. If the material is lengthy or difficult, a preliminary skimming may be necessary to determine which part of the article to scan.
  - Let your eyes run rapidly over several lines of print at a time.
  - When you find the sentence that has the information you seek, read the entire sentence.
- C. In scanning, you must be willing to skip over large sections of text without reading or understanding them.

Scanning can be done at 1500 or more words per minute.