

Reading Techniques

1) Scanning.

This is a reading method that is used more times in a day than the other techniques. Scanning involves looking only for specific information (such as keywords, numbers, names, etc.) while omitting other details. Scanning involves getting your eyes to quickly scuttle across sentence and is used to get just a simple piece of information.

There are three things you need to process in your mind before scanning a material:

- **Objective** – *what am I supposed to be looking for?*
- **Type of material to be scanned** – where can I get the information I need?
- **The layout** – How is this information in this material arranged?

Phonebooks, menu boards, and email inboxes all have familiar layouts to us, so these are the easiest to scan. In-depth articles and full novels on the other hand, are the trickiest – especially if they are made up of walls of texts.

Scan content when:

- **checking your inbox.** Scanning is a great method as it allows you to quickly sift through the most urgent messages. Read the subject line and determine if it deserves the immediate attention or not.
- **buying from book or grocery stores.** The human eyes are great at spotting patterns. Instead of going through every title or item, scan shelves for your target purchase.
- **choosing meals.** It is used to select an item in the menu card. In a restaurant or food joint, where there are has more than 10 options and you only have 15 minutes to spare. Once your eyes focus on a familiar pattern (like the words ‘lunch set’ or ‘meat entrees’), you can read only what’s in that category.

In general, scanning is most effective for material with a set layout, such as newspapers and phonebooks. This is the best technique to use when you need specific information – fast.

2) Skimming.

Skimming involves reading more in less time. Unlike scanning, you first need to get the main idea of the material before looking for certain details that back it up. This works best for non-fiction works.

This technique is typically used with a magazine or newspaper. This would help you mentally and quickly shortlist those articles which you might consider for a deeper read.

Similar to other reading techniques, you need to establish the following before skimming can be called successful:

- **Objective** – what do I need from this material?
- **Main Idea** – what is the main message or thought of this piece?
- **Supporting Data** – how can I prove that this is the main idea of the material?

Skim content when:

- **reading reviews.** The skimming is required when looking for a third party opinion before buying something. Skim reviews to get the overall impression of the product or service. Many testimonials these days have four parts, which are perfect for skimming: review title, pros, cons, and recommendation.
- **impromptu presentations.** This technique is helpful before any impromptu presentation, given that the time before presentation is very less for the preparation. If the script of the presentation is already given, (and you're more or less familiar with the topic), you can skim through the important parts and add your own improvisation. The important thing is that you understand the main message you want to impart to your audiences.
- **quick research.** Skimming is helpful when it is needed to cover the basics before writing any articles. For this purpose, collect your resources, read a couple of paragraphs, then take the main ideas of each.
- **reviewing for exams.** Skimming also comes in handy if you want to review what you've learned. Do note that this only works if you're already familiar with your subject. A quick skim of a several sentences should refresh your memory on the topics you've studied by now.

If it is necessary to have a lot of information in the shortest amount of time possible, skimming could be the best method.

3) Intensive Reading.

Intensive reading is the most time-consuming of all the reading techniques. The main goal here is to retain information for the long-term.

This method is recommended especially for language students, as it helps them truly grasp the meaning of the words in context. But it's also great for analyzing reports and detailed research. Used in conjunction with skimming and scanning, intensive reading can widen your horizons and help you keep important information longer.

Read intensively when:

- **New contracts, business proposals, or memos.** Avoid simply skimming or scanning the contents of these papers. It may seem bothersome, particularly as these use technical English, but you don't want to sign anything that you don't fully understand.

If the content seems to have different interpretations, it's best to read it intensively, or even ask the source for confirmation.

Use note-taking every time you need to read something in detail. Post-It notes make it easy, as you can stick it to pages without ruining them. For those who want more in-depth analysis of what they've just read, notebooks may work better than small Post-Its.

4) Extensive Reading.

Extensive reading focuses on reading for pleasure. This strategy is great not only for fiction works, but also if you want to improve your writing, and expand your vocabulary. It helps develop a reader's:

- **Independence** – when people read for pleasure, they'll be surprised at how pleasurable the activity really is. In time, they will grow their own book collection and pick up reading habits.
- **Comprehension** – when you have the freedom to choose what you read, you can learn comfortably at your own pace.
- **General Knowledge** – with extensive reading, you'll feel free to discover new things everyday. As there's no pressure at all, you unconsciously open yourself up to the world and its vast share of knowledge

Read extensively when:

- you have free time. There's not set rule or trick to this one because you're just reading for fun. Read what you want, when you want to, and at your own speed. Select from various materials like novels, magazines, blogs, or even street signs.