**Intermediate Reading**

**Scanning**

**Session 4**

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**What is Scanning?**

Scanning is a form of pre-reading. The popular SQ3R method includes survey, question, read, recite and review as scanning tools. Many reading methods like SQ3R advocate scanning a piece before reading the text closely. When you scan the text, you're looking at headings, scanning the body of the piece for any frequently used words or concept while reviewing the thesis of the piece and attempting to gain a general idea of the piece's argument or focus.

Scanning is another useful tool for speeding up your reading. Unlike skimming, when **scanning,** you look only for a specific fact or piece of information without reading everything.

You scan when you look for your favorite show listed in the cable guide, for your friend’s phone number in a telephone book, and for the sports scores in the newspaper. For scanning to be successful, you need to understand how your material is structured as well as comprehend what you read so you can locate the specific information you need. Scanning also allows you to find details and other information in a hurry.

How to scan.  Because you already scan many different types of material in your daily life, learning more details about scanning will be easy. Establishing your purpose, locating the appropriate material, and knowing how the information is structured before you start scanning is essential.

The material you scan is typically arranged in the following ways: alphabetically, chronologically, non-alphabetically, by category, or textually.**Alphabetical** information is arranged in order from A to Z, while **chronological** information is arranged in time or numerical order.

Information can be also be arranged in **non- alphabetical** order, such as a television listing, or by **category**, listings of like items such as an auto parts catalog. Sometimes information is located within the written paragraphs of text, also known as a **textual**sense, as in an encyclopedia entry.

Learning to use your hands while scanning is very helpful in locating specific information. Do you do anything with your hands to locate a word in a dictionary? To find a meeting time on your calendar? To read a train or bus schedule? Using your hand or finger is extremely helpful in focusing your attention and keeping your place while scanning a column of material.

Your peripheral vision can also help you scan effectively.

When your hand moves down a list of names, you see not only the name your finger is pointing to, but also the names above and below. Let your eyes work for you when searching for information.

Keep the concept of key words in mind while scanning. Your purpose will determine the key words. Suppose you are looking for the time a train leaves from New York City for Washington, D.C.The key words to keep in mind are “from New York City” and “to Washington,D.C.” If you are looking for the cost of a computer printer with the code number PX-710, the key word to locate in a list of many printers is “PX-710.”

**Scanning for Keywords**

What is scanning? It is a way to read very fast. You do not read all  
the words. You read only the words you are looking for.  
In these exercises you learn to find words quickly. Then you can  
read quickly. Circle the key word every time you see it in the line.

Example:  
Key words

1. **Read** real reel raid
2. **Three** tree there these trees

**Scanning for Information**

Readers often scan for information. They do not read all the  
words. They read only the words they need. You can learn to scan  
for information in these exercises. Work quickly. Remember, you  
do not have to read all the words.

#### How to scan a text

Before you start scanning for information, you should try to understand how the text is arranged. This will help you to locate the information more quickly. For example, when scanning for a word in a dictionary or a friend's name in your contact list, you already know that the information is arranged alphabetically. This means you can go more quickly to the part you want, without having to look through everything. For this reason, [skimming](https://www.eapfoundation.com/reading/skills/skimming/) can be a useful skill to use in combination with scanning, to give you a general idea of the text structure. Section headings, if there are any, can be especially useful.

When scanning, you will be looking for key words or phrases. These will be especially easy to find if they are names, because they will begin with a capital letter, or numbers/dates. Once you have decided on the area of text to scan, you should run your eyes down the page, in a zigzag pattern, to take in as much of the text as possible. This approach makes scanning seem much more random than other speed reading skills such as [skimming](https://www.eapfoundation.com/reading/skills/skimming/) and [surveying](https://www.eapfoundation.com/reading/skills/surveying/). It is also a good idea to use your finger as you move down (or back up) the page, to focus your attention and keep track of where you are.

**When to scan**

You scan when your aim is to find specific pieces of information. If you were doing the research for an oral presentation, you could scan the index of books, web sites, and reference materials. You would discover whether they contain any information you want and the pages where the information can be found.

In the past, you probably scanned without knowing you were doing it. Now with the information provided in this section, you can use scanning more intentionally and frequently. The more you practice, the more effective scanning will become. Finally, the most important benefit of scanning is its ability to help you become a more flexible reader. Scanning adds another high gear to your reading.

Because you may be used to reading every word and may be uncomfortable leaving some words out, you need to give yourself permission to overlook some words by skimming, scanning, and skipping material according to your reading purpose.

### Benefits of Scanning

Scanning an article helps you understand the article's main points before you dive into the meat of the article. This can make it easier to critically read the piece and to develop questions. It can also help you decide if there are any unfamiliar concepts or terms that you need to study up on before you read the piece. Because it can sometimes take several pages for an author to get to the meat of her argument, scanning also enables you to understand what the author is building up to when you sit down to read the piece in its entirety.

#### Searching vs. Scanning

Sometimes you may be looking for an idea rather than scanning for an actual word or phrase. In this case, you will be *searching* rather than scanning. [Skimming](https://www.eapfoundation.com/reading/skills/skimming/) the text first to help understand organisation is especially important when searching for an idea. It is also useful to guess or predict the kind of answer you will find, or some of the language associated with it. In this way, you still have words or phrases you can use to scan the text. As such, searching is part skimming, part scanning. For example, if you are reading a text on skin cancer and want to find the causes, you would skim the text to understand the structure, which might be a [problem-solution](https://www.eapfoundation.com/writing/essays/problemsolution/) structure; you might already know that exposure to sunlight is one of the causes so you might scan for 'sunlight' or 'sun', and because you are looking for causes you might scan for [transition words](https://www.eapfoundation.com/writing/cohesion/transitions) such as 'because' or 'cause' or 'reason'.

### Precautions

Scanning reading is not a substitute for reading and students who choose to only scan can end up with major comprehension issues. Missing even a single qualifier can dramatically change the meaning of a passage. Scanning can also sometimes establish some preconceived notions that may be incorrect. For example, you might assume an article is about the writer's opposition to a law but it could turn out that the article addresses the law's pros and cons. The things you learn scanning a piece are not set in stone and you'll need to adjust your perceptions based upon a subsequent thorough reading.

Source: <https://classroom.synonym.com/scanning-skills-reading-14588.html>

<https://www.howtolearn.com/2013/02/skimming-and-scanning-two-important-strategies-for-speeding-up-your-reading/>

<https://www.eapfoundation.com/reading/skills/scanning/>