

**INTENSIVE READING**

**PBI**

**SKIMMING FOR MAIN IDEAS**

**SESSION 3**

**MEIYANTI NURCHAERANI S.S.,M.HUM**

**UNIVERSITAS ESA UNGGUL**

**JAKARTA**

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## What Is Skimming?

Skimming is a form of rapid reading for finding the general idea—or gist—of a passage or a book. In your daily and academic life, you probably skim many things: movie reviews, newspaper articles, and passages and websites that might be useful for a research paper. Skimming is one of the tools you can use to read more in less time.

**Skimming** refers to looking *only* for the general or main ideas, and works best with non-fiction (or factual) material. With skimming, your overall understanding is reduced because you don't read everything. You read only what is important to your purpose. Skimming takes place while reading and allows you to look for details in addition to the main ideas. Skimming often refers to the way in which one reads at a faster rate to gain the general idea about the text without paying heed to the intentional and detailed meaning of the text.

**For Example** - When one reads the text only in order to understand the thesis statement, in one or two lines.

- Skimming is achieved by reading that text only which is considered to be relevant.
- Skimming requires a lower understanding of word recognition than compared to scanning.

**Procedure** - Read the introductory paragraph and the conclusion paragraph very carefully. You should search for headings and subheadings to get a good grasp of the idea.

- When you skim, you have a general question in mind, something you need or want to know about the text, such as:

## Skimming Questions

- What is the general meaning?
- Does this agree with what I already know about this subject?
- What is the writer's opinion?
- Will this information be useful to me?

Your eyes should move very quickly as you skim and should focus only on the words or sentences that will answer your questions. Often these are found in the beginning and ending paragraphs, and in the first sentences of the other paragraphs.

When you are skimming questions and passages for main ideas, you'll be on the hunt for specific words that will help you understand the passage and answering the questions. Remember to focus on nouns and verbs when you are skimming.

When you're skimming questions you'll be looking for two types of words: content and process words.

- Content words tell you **what** you're looking for.
  - For example, the content words are highlighted in bold in the following question:  
According to the reading passage, why was **Giovanni avoiding Baglioni**?

- You'll then want to skim through the reading passage looking for any mention of Giovanni avoiding Baglioni.
- Process words tell you what you'll need to do with the content.
  - For example, the process words are italicized in the following question: According to the reading passage, *why* was Giovanni avoiding Baglioni?
  - You'll want to think about Giovanni's interactions with Baglioni and then *explain why* Giovanni is avoiding him.
- Ask yourself "what does this question want me to do?"

### **Before you skim the reading passage looking for the main ideas**

- You'll want to first look at the title of the reading passage because titles can often be a clue as to the overall topic of a piece of writing (knowing the topic will help locate any related words or concepts)
- You'll also want to read any introductory information that is included: it might tell you where the reading passage is from (a novel, textbook, article from a magazine or newspaper), or it might give you information about the author
  - This information will help guide you as you skim the passage

### **As you skim the passage**

- Focus on the nouns and verbs that are related to the main topic of the passage
- Look for transitional words that connect the main ideas

- It might be helpful to read the first and last sentences of each paragraph. The first sentence is usually the topic sentence, and the final sentence usually acts as a transition between paragraphs and ideas.

## **Skimming for Research**

- Skimming is especially useful when you need to do research, since it allows you to look quickly through lots of material to get a general idea of the content and to decide if it is relevant for your purposes.

## **How to skim**

- Many people think that skimming is a haphazard process placing the eyes where ever they fall. However, to skim effectively, there has to be a structure but you don't read everything. *What you read is more important than what you leave out.* So what material do you read and what material do you leave out?
- Let's say you are doing research on a long chapter or a web site. By reading the first few paragraphs in detail, you will get a good idea of what information will be discussed. Once you know where the reading is headed, you can begin to **read only the first sentence of each paragraph**. Also called *topic sentences*, they give you the main idea of the paragraph. If you do not get the main idea in the topic sentence or if the paragraph greatly interests you, then you may want to skim more.

- Blocking out:

Block out everything in the text except the title, pictures, the first sentence (or first and last sentences) of each paragraph, and the first or last paragraph. Try to get the main idea of the passage and each paragraph.

Why are the first and last sentences important in skimming? Because each paragraph has its own topic which is called the topic sentence. Topic sentences mostly come at the very beginning and they are supported somewhere in between and then probably they are repeated or paraphrased at the end.

- Outlining :

Write down ONE sentence for each paragraph that expresses the main idea of that paragraph (this is great for advanced learners).

- At the end of each topic sentence, your eyes should drop down through the rest of the paragraph, looking for important pieces of information, such as names, dates, or events. Continue to read only topic sentences, dropping down through the rest of the paragraphs, until you are near the end. Since the last few paragraphs may contain a conclusion or summary, you should stop skimming there and read in detail. Remember that your overall comprehension will be lower than if you read in detail. If while skimming, you feel you are grasping the main ideas, then you are skimming correctly.

## **Skimming to get an overall impression.**

Skimming is useful when you want to survey a text to get a general idea of what it is about. In skimming you ignore the details and look for the main ideas. Main ideas are usually found in the first sentences of each paragraph and in the first and last paragraphs. It is also useful to pay attention to the organisation of the text.

As reading is an interactive process, you have to work at constructing the meaning of the text from the marks on the paper. You need to be active all the time when you are reading. It is useful, therefore, if you need to read the text in detail, before you start reading to activate the knowledge you have about the topic of the text and to formulate questions based on this information. Skimming a text for gist can help you formulate questions to keep you interacting with the text.

## **Skimming a text using first lines of paragraphs.**

In most academic writing, the paragraph is a coherent unit, about one topic, connected to the previous and next paragraphs. Paragraphs are organised internally and the first sentence of each paragraph is often a summary of, or an introduction to, the paragraph. You can therefore get a good idea of the overall content of a text by reading the first sentence of each paragraph. This should help you get a feeling for the structure of the text. In many cases that will be enough, but if it isn't, you will now have a good idea of the structure of the text and you will find it easier to read in detail. Familiar texts are easier to read.

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when you are reading. It is useful, therefore, if you need to read the text in detail, before you start reading to activate the knowledge you have about the topic of the text and to formulate questions based on this information. Skimming a text using first lines of paragraphs can help you formulate questions to keep you interacting with the text.

### **Skimming a text using first and last paragraphs.**

In most academic writing, the text is organised clearly with an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction gives you an idea of what the text is going to be about and the conclusion shows that this is what it has been about. You can therefore get a good idea of the overall content of a text by reading the first and last paragraphs of a text. This should help you get a feeling for the content of the text. In many cases that will be enough, but if it isn't, you will now have a good idea of the content of the text and you will find it easier to read in detail. Familiar texts are easier to read.

As reading is an interactive process, you have to work at constructing the meaning of the text from the marks on the paper. You need to be active all the time when you are reading. It is useful, therefore, if you need to read the text in detail, before you start reading to activate the knowledge you have about the topic of the text and to formulate questions based on this information. Skimming a text using first and last paragraphs can help you formulate questions to keep you interacting with the text.

### **Skimming a text, using section headings.**

In some academic writing, the text is organised through the use of headings and sub-headings. You can therefore get a good idea of the overall content of a text by reading



the headings and sub-headings first. This should help you get a feeling for the content and organisation of the text. In many cases that will be enough, but if it isn't, you will now have a good idea of the content of the text and you will find it easier to read in detail. Familiar texts are easier to read.

As reading is an interactive process, you have to work at constructing the meaning of the text from the marks on the paper. You need to be active all the time when you are reading. It is useful, therefore, before you start reading to activate the knowledge you have about the topic of the text and to formulate questions based on this information. The title, sub-titles and section headings can help you formulate questions to keep you interacting with the text.

## **Types of Skimming**

There are three types of skimming: preview, overview, and review.

### **1. Preview skimming**

Most often followed by a second skimming or a thorough reading, preview skimming is used

- in selecting a book.
- in surveying a chapter before reading or studying.
- in finding appropriate material for use in research.
- in sorting through correspondence before answering it.

You preview in an effort to learn about the ideas presented and the structure of their development.

**Method:** Read the first paragraph, and the headings and first sentences of later paragraphs and sections.

## **2. Overview skimming**

You use overview skimming to sample the reading material more thoroughly than you do in a preview, as you may not intend to read the material at a later time.

**Method:** As you do in preview skimming, you would read the first paragraph, the headings and first sentences of paragraphs and sections, but in addition, as you alternately read and skim, you alert yourself to the structure and content of the material through an awareness of paragraph patterns, thought transitions, and clue words.

This awareness will help you to understand the content, to recall more information, and to see relationships more clearly and quickly.

## **3. Review skimming**

Your purpose with review skimming is to re-familiarise yourself with material you have previously read thoroughly or skimmed.

**Method:** Prepare yourself by trying to remember as many of the ideas and details clearly. It may be that you already have a good grasp of the main ideas and will be stopping primarily to note significant details - names, places, terms, etc. You may be trying to establish in your mind a sequence of events or a procedure, or you may be attempting to fill in a skeleton outline to clarify the structure of the whole.

Familiarity with the material will enable you to skim over a great deal of it, stopping only when necessary.

## **How Do I Use Skimming?**

1. Read the title. If it is an article, check the author, publication date, and source
2. Read the introduction. If it is very long, read only the first paragraph completely. Then, read only the first sentence of every paragraph. That sentence will usually be the main idea of that paragraph.
3. Read any headings and subheadings. The headings, when taken together, form an outline of the main topics covered in the material.
4. Notice any pictures, charts, or graphs; they are usually included to emphasize important dates or concepts.
5. If you do not get enough information from the headings, or if you are working with material that does not have headings, read the first sentence of each paragraph.
6. Glance at the remainder of the paragraph.
  - a. Notice any italicized or boldface words or phrases. These are key terms.
  - b. Look for lists of ideas within the text of the material. The author may use numerals, such as (1), (2), (3) in the list, or signal words such as first, second, one major cause, another cause, etc.
7. Read the summary or last paragraph.

## **Skimming Saves Your Time**

Skimming will certainly save you a lot of time.

But as stated above, it is not the best way to read because your comprehension will be lowered.

However, skimming is useful when your goal is to preview the text to get a better idea of what it's about. It will help prepare you for deeper learning.

As learning expert and author Pat Wyman says in her book, **Instant Learning for Amazing Grades**, skimming is a terrific idea to get an overview and mental picture in your mind.

This strategy makes it much easier to recall what you're about to read.

1. Take a look at the table of contents first.
2. Review the subheadings in each chapter
3. Quickly read the first paragraph in that section
4. Check out anything in your text that is in bold or italics
5. If there is a chapter summary, now is a good time to read it over.

This completely prepares your brain to have an overview of what this chapter is about.

You can then go on to use scanning to find specific important ideas.

## **The Importance Of Skimming**

The Best IELTS Review Center consistently improve their standard to get 100% passing rate of their IELTS reviewers. IELTS Review Center in Baguio is a good example.

IELTS Review Center in Baguio has 100% passing rate of their IELTS students. They are the Best Review Center in that region serving mostly professionals who want to work overseas.

In taking an IELTS exam, it is essential to know techniques that can help you with your English proficiency. IELTS has four sub-tests: Writing, Speaking, Listening and Reading. In the IELTS Reading test, the skimming technique is very useful.

Skimming is a speed-reading technique which enables the reader to cover a vast amount of material very rapidly. It is a process of reading over text with the purpose of getting only the main ideas or the over-all impression of the content. Readers skim to get the information they need quickly without wasting time. They do not need to read everything which is what increases their speed-reading range. Your skimming skill lies in knowing what specific information to read.

### **Steps of Skimming:**

1. Read the title.
2. Read the first paragraph or the introduction.
3. Read the first sentence of each paragraph.
4. Read headings and sub-headings.
5. Notice any pictures, graphs or charts.
6. Notice any italicized or boldface phrases or words.
7. Look for important pieces of information, such as names, dates, or events.
8. Read the summary of last paragraph carefully.

It is very useful to pay attention to the organization of the text. Main ideas are found in the first sentence of each paragraph and in the first and last paragraphs. In skimming, to get an over-all impression, ignore the details and look for the main ideas. Be active all the time when you're reading. You have to work at constructing the meaning of the text in what you're reading.

In most academic writing, the paragraphs are organized internally. It is a coherent unit, which must connect to the previous and next paragraphs. Skimming a text using first lines of paragraphs is an effective way to find general information of your reading material. Always remember that reading is an interactive process.

You may also find that in some reading materials, the text is organized through the use of headings and sub-headings. This should help you get a feeling for the organization of the text and its content. You will find that familiar texts are easier to read when you are skimming a text using section headings.

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