Skimming and Scanning Get the Work Done Fast!!!

You can read in different ways for different purposes. Adjusting your reading style and reading speed to fit your purpose can save you valuable time. Skimming and scanning involve reading quickly and skipping over a great deal of the text in order to find certain information. Familiarize yourself with the main uses of skimming and scanning in order to maximize your reading time.

Skimming Uses:

- Familiarize yourself with a chapter by looking at the headings, pictures, graphs, etc.
- Preview a new textbook to find what information is inside by looking at the front and back covers and table of contents.

Scanning Uses:

- Use scanning to locate quotes in a text you have previously read.
- Find specific words you are looking for on a worksheet by moving your eyes quickly across the page.
- Use scanning to find answers to questions on a worksheet.

Academic Support Center

This material can be made available in alternative format by contacting the Academic Support Center at 507-389-7339 or 1-800-722-9359 (Voice). For TTY communication, contact MN RELAY Service at 711 or 1-800-627-3529.

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Skimming vs. Scanning

Created by The Write Spot Writing Team

South Central College
A MINNESOTA COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Skimming and Scanning

Skimming and scanning are two different processes. Ask yourself why you're reading the material. You need to find your *purpose* for reading to be able to choose which strategy to use. Neither of these methods require you to read everything word-for-word. Both enable you to cover a vast amount of material in a short amount of time.

Skimming

Skimming is used to find the main ideas of the text quickly or to simply familiarize yourself with a text that you have never seen before. The purpose of skimming is to get an idea of what is contained within a text before reading it thoroughly, word for word. Rather than reading every-thing word for word, when skimming, you would focus more on these specific things:

- Read the title
- Read the introduction or first paragraph
- Read the chapter preview or highlights
- Read headings and subheadings
- Look at pictures, graphs, charts, and bold lettering
- Read the summary or last paragraph

Scanning

If you need to locate a specific piece of information quickly, you would use scanning. When scanning, you know exactly what you're looking for, you just have to find it. To scan when reading, look for specific words or information. Let your eyes run rapidly over several lines of print. Use headings and other aids to help you identify sections where your answer might be found.

Quick Tip!

When skimming and scanning, you **don't** need to, and **shouldn't** read eve-rything word for word. Reading word for word should be used when reading for comprehension.