**Reading Strategies:**

**scanning, skimming and intensive reading**

You will probably be aware that you are already skilled in using different reading strategies for different purposes in your daily life. You may feel less confident about doing this in your academic studies: maybe you read everything too thoroughly. Or perhaps you have become too confident and have discovered from the feedback from your tutor or supervisor that you do not read key texts thoroughly enough. It is important to match your reading strategy to the reading purpose.

**Consider whether you ever read for these purposes and what reading strategy you tend to use:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Reading purpose:*** | ***Example from daily: life*** | ***Example from academic work:*** |
| 1.  look for specific information when you know how to locate it by following a procedure | ·    look up the meaning of a word in a dictionary | ·    look for a particular reference in a reference list of an article |
| 2.  search for specific information that may be somewhere a text | ·    check particular details of an incident reported in a newspaper article | ·    check what research methods the authors of a research report article used |
| 3.  look quickly through a text to see what it is about before deciding to read it | ·    see whether a magazine article will be worth reading | ·    see whether an academic article is going to be relevant for your task |
| 4. read quickly through a text to gain an overview of its content | ·    read through a new recipe | ·    read a front-line text which is relevant but not central to your task |
| 5.  read through an easy text where it is not important to remember all that you’ve read | ·    read a novel | ·    read a textbook chapter to revise a subject that you know well |
| 6.  read a text thoroughly to understand and remember what you’ve read | ·    read the instructions for booking and paying for a journey online | ·    read a front-line text whose content is central to your task |

**You may find it useful to think in terms of three main reading strategies:**

·    ***scanning*** - looking through a text to find keywords and phrases that are likely to indicate the specific information that you are seeking, then reading just this piece of the text (situations 1 and 2 above)

·    ***skimming*** - reading just those parts of a text that are most likely to indicate what the authors are talking about at different points to gain an overview of the content (situations 3 and 4)

·    ***intensive reading*** - reading through every word of a text from beginning to end (situations 5 and 6)

**For many reading purposes in academic work you may have noticed that you use more than one strategy in sequence. For a particular text that turns out to be centrally important for your reading purpose, the sequence might be:**

·    ***scan*** the title and abstract to see whether the text is likely to be at all relevant

·    ***scan*** through parts of the content to see whether particular details in the text confirm that it will be relevant

·    ***skim*** the text to gain an overview of its content and confirm how centrally relevant it is

·    ***intensively read* the whole text** since it clearly is centrally relevant, so as to understand and evaluate its content in depth

**A secret of efficient reading that will soon become automatic if you consciously do it for every text, is to check how well the reading strategy you are going to use next fits your reading purpose.**

·    *Check your reading purpose and then use scanning, skimming or intensive reading - either on their own or in sequence - as required to achieve this purpose.*

There are many textbooks and websites that offer general guidance on reading strategies. Some include practical exercises to help you improve your skills. If search with your website browser using keywords such as ‘skim read’ or ‘scan skim’ will lead you to plenty of sites.