

STUDY MATERIAL - 05

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSE

Types of Reading:

(Skimming, Scanning, Inferential Reading, Critical Reading)

1. Skimming

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. With skimming, our overall understanding is reduced because we 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. There are three types of skimming: preview, overview, and review. 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.

Purposes of Skimming:

- To see what is in the news on a website or on a paper
- To look through a text to decide whether you want to read it or not
- To look through the television guide/program schedule to plan your evening
- To see through a catalogue to choose an offer
- To go through the options after searching something on Google
- And many more

Steps to Follow:

- Read the title first. Generally, titles will give you the most important idea of the text. If the title does not interest you, you will probably skip it at once.
- Then read the sub-headings (if any) of the text. It will give a basic idea about the text and what's in it.
- If there is no sub-heading, read the first line or first few lines of the text. It will give you the gist of the text.
- If you want to skim it further, you may read the first lines of all the paragraphs and focus on the emphasized (**bolded** & *italicized*) words in them to get more ideas about the text.

Example - When one reads the text only in order to understand the thesis statement, in one or two lines, this technique works effectively in non-fiction materials, newspapers, and long novels.

2. Scanning

Scanning refers to the technique when one looks into the document or the text provided for searching some specific text such as some keywords. One should search for headings and subheadings to get a good grasp of the idea, as to where the required detail will be found. Scanning requires one to have a look at the whole document quickly at least once. Scanning requires a higher understanding of word recognition compared to skimming.

Purposes of Scanning:

- To search for a word in a dictionary or index
- To find a phone number or an address in a directory
- To check the time schedule of a program in an agenda
- To check the price of a specific item in a catalogue.
- To know a particular information from a text

Steps to Follow:

- Before starting to scan a text for a particular information, you know some basic things about that text. You will not be able to scan a text efficiently if you do not have a basic idea about that text. If the text is completely unknown to you, you should skim it first to get some ideas about that text. This will help you to guess the section or part of the text where you might find the information you need.
- Notice how the information is arranged. It can be arranged either alphabetically or numerically. However, some texts are not arranged at all. In that case, you have to guess a section and scan it through to get your information.
- Scanning a random unknown page of a text is difficult. It may take more time than the usual. However, it won't take too much time if you move your eyes vertically and diagonally keeping in mind the exact letters or numbers you are looking for.

Example - Now it may be applied to the real-life example of a dictionary, wherein one looks for a specific word meaning or a directory wherein one searches for the phone number of someone.

(N.B: Skimming and scanning, therefore, are two very different strategies for speed reading. They are used for different purposes, and they require different reading skills, but they are very significant to go about reading comprehension.)

3. Inferential Reading

It is the way to read and process written information and understand the underlying meaning of the text. This information is then used to infer or determine deeper meaning that is not explicitly stated. Inferential comprehension requires readers to combine ideas and draw conclusions.

Purpose of Inferencing:

Observations occur when we can see something happening. In contrast, inferences are what we figure out based on an experience. Helping readers understand when information is implied, or not directly stated, will improve their skill in drawing conclusions and making inferences. Making an inference involves using what you know to make a guess about what you don't know or reading between the lines. Readers who make inferences use the clues in the text along with their own experiences to help them figure out what is not directly said, making the text personal and memorable.

Steps to Follow:

- Identify an Inference Question / Key words in questions: suggest, imply, infer... e.g. The author seems to imply that...
- Trust the Passage. Let go off your prejudices and prior knowledge and use the passage to prove your inference.
- Hunt for Clues—supporting details, vocabulary, character's actions, descriptions, dialogue, and more—to prove your inferences.
- Narrow your Choices Be sure to pick the best evidence to support your inference. You want evidence that explicitly supports your inference.
- Practise to get really good at making inferences, you'll need to practice making inferences!

Example-

- Sherry's toddler is in bed upstairs. She hears a bang and crying. Sherry can infer that her toddler is hurt or scared.
- John hears a smoke alarm next door and smells burnt bacon. John can infer that his neighbour burnt her breakfast.
- If you see someone eating a new food and he/she makes a face, then you infer he/she does not like it.
- If someone slams a door, you can infer that he/she is upset about something.

4. Critical Reading

Critical reading means that a reader applies certain processes, models, questions, and theories that result in enhanced clarity and comprehension. There is more involved, both in effort and understanding, in a critical reading than in a mere "skimming" of the text. What is the difference? If a reader "skims" the text, superficial characteristics and information are obtained as far as the reader goes. A critical reading gets at "deep structure" (if there is such a thing apart from the superficial text!), that is, logical consistency, tone, organization, and a number of other very important sounding terms.

Steps to Follow:

- **Prepare to become part of the writer's audience.**

After all, authors design texts for specific audiences, and becoming a member of the target audience makes it easier to get at the author's purpose. Learn about the author, the history of the author and the text, the author's anticipated audience; read introductions and notes.

- **Prepare to read with an open mind.**

Critical readers seek knowledge; they do not "rewrite" a work to suit their own personalities. Your task as an enlightened critical reader is to read what is on the page, giving the writer a fair chance to develop ideas and allowing yourself to reflect thoughtfully, objectively, on the text.

➤ **Consider the title.**

This may seem obvious, but the title may provide clues to the writer's attitude, goals, personal viewpoint, or approach.

➤ **Read slowly.**

Again, this appears obvious, but it is a factor in a "close reading." By slowing down, you will make more connections within the text.

➤ **Use the dictionary and other appropriate reference works.**

If there is a word in the text that is not clear or difficult to define in context: look it up. Every word is important, and if part of the text is thick with technical terms, it is doubly important to know how the author is using them.

➤ **Make notes.**

Jot down marginal notes, underline and highlight, write down ideas in a notebook, do whatever works for your own personal taste. Note for yourself the main ideas, the thesis, the author's main points to support the theory. Writing while reading aids your memory in many ways, especially by making a link that is unclear in the text, concrete in your own writing.

➤ **Keep a reading journal.**

In addition to note-taking, it is often helpful to regularly record your responses and thoughts in a more permanent place that is yours to consult. By developing a habit of reading and writing in conjunction, both the skills will improve.

Critical reading involves using logical and rhetorical skills. Identifying the author's thesis is a good place to start, but to grasp how the author intends to support it is a difficult task. More often than not an author will make a claim (most commonly in the form of the thesis) and support it in the body of the text. The support for the author's claim is in the evidence provided to suggest that the author's intended argument is sound, or reasonably acceptable. What ties these two together is a series of logical links that convinces the reader of the coherence of the author's argument: this is the warrant. If the author's premise is not supportable, a critical reading will uncover the lapses in the text that shows it to be unsound.
