

6. Reading Rate is Important

We read for many reasons:

- To solve a problem
- To find out information
- To learn new things
- To find out how something works or is put together
- For enjoyment

Because there is so much to read, it's important to learn how to read efficiently. Not everything we read will be easy or interesting. Therefore, it's worthwhile to learn how to "shift reading gears" in order to read any material and get the most from it.

Reading rate is important. If a student reads material too quickly, their speed of understanding may not keep pace. If they're under a time limit, they have to adapt their reading rate for finding the basic information versus reading that same material at a more leisurely pace. Similarly, a student must adjust the reading rate for the type of material, whether that's a textbook passage or a cookie recipe.

The Benefits of Scanning and Skimming

Here are some tips you can share with your teen to help them become effective and efficient readers:

By learning to **scan** and **skim**, you can become skillful at selecting material that should be read and the material that's not as important to read, so you can save time and still get the most out of what you're reading.

SCANNING

To **scan** a reading selection means to **quickly look over** or survey the selection to grasp its layout and organization.

First, **check out the title**, because it will often indicate what the selection or chapter is about.

Second, look at how the selection or chapter is **set up**. Are there one or more headings or subheadings? Are there any diagrams, pictures, charts, graphs or other visuals? Have certain words been bolded? Are there sidebars or footnotes? Is the selection long or short, fiction or non-fiction? By letting your eye run rapidly over the material, you will find what you want. This gives you a **"snapshot" idea** of what is in the selection.

Imagine you're at a magazine counter and want a copy of your favourite magazine. Would you begin at the top of the rack and work your way through every row reading each title, or would you quickly look for the magazine because you're already familiar with its size and the general format of its cover? Chances are, you'd choose the second method. This is exactly what we do when we scan a reading selection.



SKIMMING

Now that you've scanned the selection to see how it's set up, skim a large quantity of reading material and pick up only the specific information that's important or of interest. Instead of reading word by word, your eyes will travel rapidly over the printed page until you find what you're looking for. Knowing that the selection is either fiction or non-fiction, the reader will read accordingly.

Let's say you were reading a newspaper article. The most important information (who, what, where, when, why and how) will appear in the first paragraph or two, so you'll look there to find out what happened and who was involved. The balance of the article can be read at your leisure. A good reader will learn to read beginning and concluding sentences to find out information in a single paragraph, and introductory and concluding paragraphs in longer articles.

By skimming, you'll save valuable time while acquiring basic information or determining whether the material will be useful for a specific purpose.

Quick Tips – How to Skim and Scan

1. Clearly understand the purpose for reading.
2. Scan the table of contents, chapter headings and/or subheadings.
3. Quickly move the eyes over the page, focusing on headings and subheadings, and discard any information that is not directly related to the purpose for reading.
4. Skim over the remaining material and selectively omit unrelated information.
5. As quickly as possible, locate the topic sentence of each paragraph (which is usually the first sentence) and the concluding sentence.
6. Practice skimming and scanning to locate additional information. Gradually, speed and accuracy will improve.
7. Read the last paragraph carefully for summary information.
8. Carefully review any charts, graphs, tables, diagrams, footnotes and any other information.

When to use different rates

| Speed | Why use it | When to use it |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Scan (very fast) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To find the author's purpose• To find an article's organization• To get an overview | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Textbooks, references, magazine and newspaper articles |
| Skim (fast) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To find main ideas• To find specific information | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• News stories, magazine articles, textbooks• Lists, indices, directions, timetables and schedules, tables of content |
| Read for understanding (slow) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To understand• To follow directions• To organize ideas• To relate ideas• To review• To evaluate• To remember• To reflect• To enjoy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any material, but especially when it is unfamiliar, difficult, important or unusual |