



Douglas College

Douglas College Learning Centre

SKIMMING

Skimming is a way of reading quickly to get the basic ideas out of a text. Skimming is very useful when you simply have too much reading to do or when a close reading is not needed. Skimming can vary from very general skimming where only the very basic ideas are understood to closer skimming where a greater amount of the information is comprehended. Part A of this handout outlines the general steps for skimming things like textbooks. Part B focuses on skimming research articles.

Part A: Skimming Textbook Chapters and Other Informational-type Reading.

1. Purpose: Consider how much detail you need to get from your reading, why you need the information and how much time you have.
2. Pre-read: If these features are present, look at
 - a. Titles, headings and sub-headings
 - b. Chapter objectives and/or review questions
 - c. Marginal notes or bold-face terms
 - d. Visuals: pictures, graphs, diagrams, charts, etc.
 - e. List of key terms
3. Read
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Chapter Summary
 - c. For closer skimming, you can also read either:
 - i. First and last paragraph of each section
 - ii. First sentence of each paragraph
 - iii. First and last sentence of each paragraphTexts vary. Look at your text and consider which of these choices would lead to the most information for the time spent. Most texts follow a pattern, so considering one chapter in a text will often give you ideas about the way the information is organized in the whole text.

Part B: Skimming APA Research Articles

Because APA research articles are generally organized in a very similar way, they are perfect for skimming. Here, each section is described briefly and some tips on skimming the section are given. For many purposes, simply reading the abstract is enough, but if you need a more detailed skimming, the other sections listed here are in order of priority.

1. **The Abstract**
Because the abstract is a summary of the article, you should read it carefully. This is often enough. The basic information from each section of the article is included in the abstract.
2. **The Discussion**
The Discussion section (usually the last in the article) describes the implications of the research, so it is often the most important section of an article. You can skim this section by reading first and last sentences of paragraphs.
3. **The Results**
This section gives the detailed results of the research study, often using statistical charts and data. One way to skim this section is just to look at charts and graphs.
4. **The Literature Review or Introduction (1st section after the abstract)**
This section describes other studies done on the same or related topics. If the article does not have an Abstract, it is important to find the research questions, usually in the last paragraph of the lit review. If the article does have an Abstract, this is not necessary as the research questions are usually stated in the Abstract.
5. **The Research Methods**
This section is very important for doing a close reading, but generally can be skipped in skimming an article.