



Here's How to Skim Read Effectively!

Skimming is a strategic, selective reading method in which you focus on the main ideas of a text in order to extract the essence of the author's main message rather than the finer points. Other than being useful when you're short for time, it's also an efficient way to refresh your memory of large amounts of material before an exam. However, it's not as simple as just getting through a reading as fast possible. Here are 10 tips on how to get more out of less!

1. Find your reason to read

Instead of approaching the text as something you just have to get through, identify a purpose for this reading. What do you want to get out of it? Why are you reading it? Keep this purpose in mind as you read.

2. Introductions & Conclusions are key

If there's an 'Abstract' section at the start read it in full, as it will give you a basis for what to keep an eye out for while skimming. Usually, an author will also include a summary as the final paragraph of a reading which can serve the same purpose to a skimmer as an abstract.

3. Beginnings & Endings

Main ideas tend to be found in similar places across most readings; it's a good rule of thumb to prioritize reading the first and last sentences of paragraphs and the first and last paragraphs of major sections.

4. Prioritize your time

Read only the amount of text necessary to determine if a section presents a main idea or support for a main idea. If you find yourself in the middle of a longer paragraph, assess whether it's time to move on to the next one.

5. Visual & Verbal Cues

Watch for signal words and phrases that indicate an author's direction (e.g., however, although, moreover, in addition to). Also pay close attention to bolded words and chapter headings, as they can provide insight into where the key information is located.

6. Read key info out loud

Instead of rapidly going from paragraph to paragraph, take a moment before moving on to read aloud the important sentences & information you managed to locate.

7. Don't forget to remember

After a key section or page, stop and write a 1-3 sentence summary in your own words. This keeps your brain engaged and ensures you are comprehending what you read. Also helpful to reference when talking about a text in class or studying for a test!

8. If lost, retrace steps

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed and not retaining much information mid-skim, it's okay to take a deep breath and reset. Sometimes skimming back from the start can help you regain focus.

9. Don't rush!

Even if you're short for time, try your best to move quickly but intentionally using the tips mentioned here. Keep in mind that the goal should be to comprehend what the reading is trying to say, not to get through it as fast as possible.

10. When skimming isn't enough

Acknowledge that by skimming you may end up missing some key details in favor of the main ideas. These details can help solidify concepts in your mind, so if you find yourself still confused about a section after skimming it may be best to go back when you have time to fully read it.