Reading Skills

# Introduction

Reading is one of the language skills that you will study and practice in this textbook. Remember reading is one of the most important activities any successful student does in any course of study. It is important to note that reading is an *active* process; you need to apply strategies that will enable you make sense of what you read.

The chapter aims at making you a good reader; somebody who will be able to monitor your rate of progress as you read and improve your understanding. To do this you will be introduced to a number of strategies or approaches at both surface and deeper levels.

There will also be opportunities for you to practice. Specifically, you will be introduced to strategies of reading namely: skimming, scanning, SQ3R, active reading, reading for comprehension. You will also be introduced to resources within a text such as graphics conventions, symbols, layout, punctuation, figures, diagrams, tables, pictures and word roots in sciences. Then the chapter will also discuss some barriers or obstacles to effective reading.

OUTCOMES

By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

* Describe a variety of reading strategies effective readers use as they read a text for comprehension.
* Apply a chosen strategy to read an identified passage
* Discuss common barriers to effective reading
* Suggest ways of solving problems readers experience during their reading activities.
* Read any resource efficiently using any of the reading strategies discussed
* Read texts critically to help you evaluate the given information.

A good way of getting started on developing your reading skills is to think about how you read a text or passage. There are three main reading techniques that you can use: scanning, skimming, and focused reading. Let's discuss each in turn.

# Scanning***5***

The technique of scanning is a useful one to use if you want to get an overview of the text you are reading as a whole – its shape, the focus of each section, the topics or key issues that are dealt with, and so on. In order to scan a piece of text you might look for sub- headings or identify key words and phrases which give you clues about its focus. Another useful method is to read the first sentence or two of each paragraph in order to get the general gist of the discussion and the way that it progresses.

1. Adapted from OpenLearn, Available at <http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=200709&direct=1> (CC: BY NC SA)

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Scanning is used to find a particular piece of information. Run your eyes over the text looking for the specific piece of information you need. Use scanning on schedules, meeting plans, etc. in order to find the specific details you require. If you see words or phrases that you don't understand, don't worry when scanning.

Scanning is what you do to find an answer to a specific question. You may run your eyes quickly down the page in a zigzag or winding S pattern. If you are looking for a name, you note capital letters. For a date, you look for numbers. Vocabulary words may be boldfaced or italicized. When you scan for information, you read only what is needed.

### Examples of Scanning

* + The "What's on TV" section of your newspaper.
  + A telephone number in the directory
  + A horoscope guide

# Skimming

Skimming is used to quickly gather the most important information, or 'gist'. Run your eyes over the text, noting important information. Use skimming to quickly get up to speed on a current business situation. It's not essential to understand each word when skimming.

Skimming is covering the chapter to get some of the main ideas and a general overview of the material. It is what you do first when reading a chapter assignment. You don’t read for details at this point.

Here is how you skim a chapter:

* + Read the first paragraph of the chapter line by line.
  + Next, read all the bold print headings starting at the beginning.
  + Read the first sentence of every paragraph.
  + Study any pictures, graphs, charts, and maps.
  + Finally, read the last paragraph of the chapter.

As you skim, you could write down the main ideas and develop a chapter outline.

### Examples of Skimming:

* + The Newspaper (quickly to get the general news of the day)
  + Magazines (quickly to discover which articles you would like to read in more detail)
  + Business and Travel Brochures (quickly to get informed)

# Focused Reading

Focused reading employs two sub skills namely extensive and intensive reading. However, the idea is to have an area of emphasis or focus. In other words, it is a purposeful kind of reading, during which you target a specific area of study. Let us examine how the two skills relate to and differ from each other.

EXTENSIVE READING

Extensive reading is used to obtain a general understanding of a subject and includes reading longer texts for pleasure, as well as business books. Use extensive reading skills to improve your general knowledge of business procedures. Do not worry if you do not understand each word.

### Examples of Extensive Reading

* + The latest marketing strategy book
  + A novel you read before going to bed
  + Magazine articles that interest you

INTENSIVE READING

Intensive reading is used on shorter texts in order to extract specific information. It includes very close accurate reading for detail. Use intensive reading skills to grasp the details of a specific situation. In this case, it is important that you understand each word, number or fact.

### Examples of Intensive Reading

* + A laboratory report
  + A journal or newspaper article
  + A business letter