

Reading techniques activity

- When you are asking one of the following questions, which is the most appropriate reading technique to use?

Skimming is a kind of 'scooting' across the 'surface' of a text, generally used to get a broad idea of what a text is all about. You therefore might want to skim read to see if a text is relevant to your interest or subject, to get an idea of how difficult the material is or to find out how much of it you may have to read closely at a later stage.

Scanning is what you do when you quickly examine part of a text for one or more specific items that you are interested in. For example you may scan a section of a book for a particular name. You should rapidly move across and down the text looking only for those words you are interested in - do not begin to read groups of words or sentences. Dates and names (beginning with a capital letter) are particularly easy to find using this method.

Light Reading is sometimes appropriate in studying. It is somewhere between skimming and close reading. It does not require full concentration and is often used to get a working knowledge of the contents of the text.

Close Reading means reading in detail with full concentration. It means reading groups of words, but not mechanically, one at a time. Rather you should aim to read in such a way that the idea or information they convey is understood. You will find, as you practise this, that it is just an extension of the way in which you already understand written material.

Another way of expressing this is to say that close reading is active reading. Concentration is required for close reading - but remember that the objective is understanding and not memorising.

Question	Technique
Am I going to use this text for background reading, perhaps to 'fill out' my grasp of a subject?	
Is this text essential reading and a key element of the course, essay or presentation?	
Will it be enough to read a chapter(s) or part(s) of an article to get an overview of the material?	
Do I want to get an overview of the whole book?	
Do I want to study a text intensely, to grasp all the main ideas and/or collect all the information?	
Do I need to find some specific pieces of information in a text?	
Despite undertaking Step 1 above am I still unclear how useful this text will be?	