

Skimming

If you have learned to preview, you can simply expand this approach into the rapid reading skill of skimming. Remember that your comprehension will be very limited and you will not comprehend many details. You cannot skim a math or science textbook and learn that subject. Skimming is a device for obtaining a general idea about a book's content. It may help you to use one of the following patterns.

- A first method of skimming follows a preview of material. Having read the opening and closing sentences of each paragraph, the reader returns to pick up quickly the facts and ideas offered elsewhere in each portion. He then skims rapidly through the body of each portion to identify the significant phrases or key words.
- A second method of skimming is to read rapidly the first part of each line. The reader hugs the left-hand margins (or sometimes the right-hand margin) and reads about a third of each line throughout the page.
- A third method of skimming is quite similar to margin-hugging. In this method, however, the reader reads only the central third of each line. Thus, a portion of every line is read.
- A fourth method is to look only for key words or phrases set off by numbering, italics, quotation marks, capital letters, underlining, or some other typographical sign. This method may result in fragmentary comprehension of details rather than main ideas.
- A fifth method of skimming is to move down the page in a more or less diagonal pattern. The reader may jump from the beginning of one line to the middle or end of the next line, and so on down the page. Occasionally a complete sentence may be read if it seems significant.

The next step in mastering the art of skimming is one that only you can take. Keep using this technique as frequently as you can. Use previewing to help sort reading materials according to their difficulty and your purpose. Then skim those which require more attention to details. Your skill in comprehension will also grow as you use this technique.

Continue to practice skimming:

- When reading newspapers and magazines.
- When you need only the "gist" of an article.
- When you wish to sample a book in the library before deciding to take it out.
- When you wish to sample a number of opinions and ideas on a particular subject.
- When you need to gather material for a talk or paper.

From *The Art of Efficient Reading* by George Spache and Paul Berg