

Skimming to Find Information

Skimming—glancing through an entire selection of text—is an important skill for researching. Students need to learn that when you skim you look for key words or a certain part instead of reading every sentence.

- Time:** 2 or more sessions of 10 minutes each
- Materials:** ● several different non-fiction texts
- Grouping:** whole group and individuals

Procedure:

Session 1 – General Ideas

1. Display a brief non-fiction text on an interactive whiteboard using a document reader. Ask students to skim the passage and then you will ask them some questions. Leave the selection displayed for a couple of minutes only.
2. Ask some basic questions about the text. Most students will respond by saying, “You didn’t give us enough time” or “I’m not finished reading.” Explain what it means to skim the text versus reading every word and sentence.
3. Display the text again and work with students to look for and record the following:
 - A key word or phrase from the beginning
 - Key words—boldface, large font, repeated words
 - Any names, dates, or places
 - Title and or headings
 - A key word or phrase from the end

Explain that this is the procedure for skimming for general ideas from the text.

When would it be helpful to get a quick picture of the general ideas in a text? That’s right, when you’re deciding if this text will give information related to your inquiry question.

4. Now have students skim independently from a text following the same procedure. Here are some tips you can share with students:
 - Move your eyes quickly over each paragraph.
 - When you find a key word, read that part carefully.
 - Ignore everything else.

Session 2 – Details

5. Display a new text on the interactive whiteboard. Choose a specific detail for students to skim.
6. Have students read the selection on their own and put their hands up when they come to the key word(s).
7. Highlight these on the text. Debrief with students to evaluate whether they really are related to the focus detail.

This time, search for key words related to this detail. Move your eyes quickly over each section or paragraph until you find the words you are looking for. Read this section carefully.

8. Now provide a new selection for students and have them skim independently for a specific detail.

Teaching Tip: Students may need practice over several sessions to become proficient at skimming for both general ideas and specific details.