

Scan Reading vs. Speed Reading

by: Steve Snelling

Scan Reading is a particularly useful skill to learn and practice regularly. It differs from Speed Reading, which employs techniques for broadening the width of text you can see at a single glance, plus moving quickly down the page to keep from having any wasted eye movement. Speed Reading takes some time to master and you can slow down again if you don't keep using the technique regularly.

Scan Reading has nothing to do with how fast you read the text, but it can save a lot of time, by helping you decide what to read (and not read). First, you have to give yourself permission to only read what you want to – or what you need to – otherwise you will need to read the newspaper or magazine cover-to-cover. Quickly, you will realize that most things are not read cover-to-cover, so some selective reading is always present. Scan Reading takes this further and allows you to organize the content into what you want to see. Existing table of contents, outlines, even indexes – can help you find and read titles of articles – to then decide if you want to read any more.

Scan Reading is very useful for getting through magazines & newspapers, and can help when doing research (either on the Internet or in text books). Scan Reading initially focuses on looking at the outline of a document or source. Does it have a Table of Contents, Index, or other outline that tells you where items are located? Most magazines have a table of contents & maybe a featured articles page – that can be very helpful in deciding if the topic (based on the title or a brief description) is of interest to you. Once at the article, usually there is a brief synopsis (just under the title), or the first paragraph will often tell you what the story or write-up is about. After reading these – you can decide if to read any more of the article (or if busy, mark it for a full reading later).

You might want to put a *post-it-note* on the cover of a magazine or book, or slip in an index card as a bookmark, to indicate what you have already found of interest – that you may want to read later. Often you may breeze through most of a magazine or newspaper – just looking at the article titles or pictures – before deciding to completely read anything. Think about reading the article, the way you might look at someone's resume – you look at the major side headings, and focus on the main experience sections, once you see how their other information is organized. You glance through or scan read the entire document, before you go back and really read a few sections that interest you.

In today's fast paced business world, time to read is scarce, and information is important. Scan Reading on a daily basis can be very helpful for saving time and maximizing the information that you can receive.