

SKIM AND SCAN

Component: Academic Reading
ILO: To assess relevance of a text

TOOL

This will help students to quickly and efficiently decide if a text is relevant to their study.

Deciding what is relevant and what you should be reading can be difficult.

You can try skimming: going through a text quickly to get an overall impression of the contents.

Or you could use scanning: going through a text looking for certain things, e.g., names or keywords

Using one of these techniques is recommended when you are, for instance, looking for sources for an essay. You will not have time to read everything that has been written on the subject, so you need to quickly appraise the text to see if it is relevant to you.

ACTIVITY

Give students a text relevant to your session. It may be useful to have a few articles and give different groups/pairs different ones.

Ask them to skim through it to get a general idea of what it is about. You could have a discussion at this point about the differences in the approaches of the texts, but keep it light.

Now ask them to scan it looking for keywords (either that came up in discussion or that you provide).

Discuss again and ask students to form an opinion of the text. What are key points/facts that jump out at them?

You could now ask them to write a paragraph about the text or use the information they have gleaned for a further activity related to the session. If the module assessment is written it is good to get students writing in class as often as possible to practise the skill.



LARGE GROUP TEACHING

With large groups, you can either run this as a solo activity and then put students into groups to discuss/adjust their decisions or you could have small-group discussions which contribute to a whole-group activity of generating one list. You could use more than one text about one subject and each group contributes to form a jigsaw of an overall picture of the subject.

SUCCESS

Students can appraise a text quickly thus reducing the feeling of being overwhelmed when faced with multiple and/or lengthy academic works.

NEXT STEPS

You could deepen this activity by asking students to read strategically - looking at introductions and conclusions, reading topic sentences (the first sentence in a paragraph that sums up the main idea of that paragraph) etc.

RESOURCES

www.musostudy.com/resources/3SS/skimscan.png

Image for use on slides etc.