

READING PROCESSES

There are four reading processes, all very different. You should know your purpose for reading and use the correct process.

Scanning is not actually reading. It is letting your eyes run across a page to find one small bit of information. You use scanning when you look for a word in a dictionary or in an index, or for a name in a phone book. You may also use scanning to locate a word or a number on a page or screen of print. When you scan, you can cover a full page of print in less than a second—maybe 300 words per minute or more, but your comprehension is between zero and one percent. You get only the one word or number that you are searching for, and no more information.

Skimming is useful when you need to cover a lot of reading in a short time. You can skim material before a lecture or class discussion or before a meeting if you did not have time to read the material beforehand. Skimming is useful as a preview step when doing textbook reading if the material is difficult. To skim, you should read the first and last paragraphs completely and read the first sentence of all other paragraphs. Since a little over fifty percent of the time the main idea is stated in the first sentence, you will get the gist of the material covered without getting many details. You can skim at about 1000 words per minute—depending on the size of the paragraphs, of course. You are not actually reading 1000 words in a minute because you are simply skipping large portions of the text. Your comprehension will be a little under fifty percent.

General Reading or Reading is the most frequently processes used once you get out of school. The average reading rate for college freshmen is about 250 WPM with 70 percent comprehension. You do not want to strive for 100 percent comprehension when doing general reading, as this will slow your rate, and 100 percent comprehension is hardly ever necessary. When doing general reading, you should try to avoid regressions and vocalization. But sub-vocalization is necessary for any reading. About the fastest rate ever measured for reading is 500 WPM, which is about as fast as one can process words.

Study Reading is the process most frequently used by students. College students often have low reading rates because they get into the habit of using study reading for everything. You should not consider rate when you are reading textbook material on which you will be tested. Your rate might be as slow as 50WPM because of all the steps involved in reading for 100 percent comprehension. You may need to go back and re-read (make regressions) if you cannot recite in your own words what you just read. Sometimes vocalizing helps your understanding and memory. You need to organize the material as you read and constantly test yourself to make sure you understood and remembered the information.

Tutoring & Learning Services

LIB 206

813-974-2713



**UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA**