

Non-Fiction Reading Strategies

Process

- Pencil on page at all times!
- Skim: focus on introduction, topic sentences, and conclusion
- Annotate deliberately (see below)

Technique

- Circle BIRTHDAY words (but, instead, rather, though, however, despite, although, yet) and underline the sentence
- Circle dashes and underline the sentence containing the dash
- Underline rhetorical questions
- Underline what comes after a colon
- Underline topic sentences
- Claim (main idea) is often in conclusion – focus on conclusion when skimming!
- As you read, *STAR* where you find the claim (or write the word CLAIM)
- Note repetitions and rhetorical signals

Non-Fiction Skimming Strategies

KEY: DO NOT READ! Instead, create a mental road map. Constantly think: WHERE is the reading going? WHAT is its purpose (main point)? HOW is it getting there? WHEN should I speed up and when should I slow down?

1. Constantly focus on the overall rather than the specific. Ask yourself these 3 questions as you read:
 - What is the main idea (claim)?
 - What is the tone?
 - Is this information important?

Non-Fiction Reading Strategies

2. Think of a train: Focus on beginnings and endings
 - Like a train, start slowly (read the introduction carefully), speed up in the middle (skim the less significant supporting details), and finish slowly (read the conclusion carefully).
 - The main idea is established in the introduction and finalized in the conclusion.
 - Topic sentences and concluding sentences establish the main idea of the paragraph. Oftentimes they summarize all you need to know!
 - Topic sentences also provide the WHERE you are going.
 - The conclusion provides the destination – where you are ending up.

3. Thought reversers and interesting punctuation: Know the road signs that tell you WHEN to slow down and focus intently.
 - **BIRTHDAY words** – *but, instead, rather, though, however, despite, although, yet* – tell you when there is a shift in evidence or direction as well as emphasize the key points. The main idea is often found FOLLOWING these BIRTHDAY words.

 - **Interesting punctuation** – colons, dashes, quotation marks – tells you when authors are drawing conclusions, offering supportive evidence, and emphasizing key points.

4. Know when to speed up and slow down – critical strategy that takes practice!
 - It's not necessary to read in complete sentences. Read the start of a sentence with an eye to whether it will yield useful information. If not, skip rest of sentence.
 - Skip examples and proofs – come back if a question requires you to read them.

5. Read Vertically rather than Horizontally – also critical and takes practice!
 - Horizontally (side to side) when reading introductions/topic sentences/conclusion and ideas after thought-reversers (birthday words)
 - Vertically (down the page) when reading the middle of a body paragraph

(Use your pencil to guide your eyes – move pencil side to side for the horizontal and zigzag down the middle of the page for the vertical)