

# Reading Techniques: Skimming vs Scanning

By EnglishExam.eu Team | 2/11/2026

*Master the art of Skimming and Scanning to boost your reading speed and accuracy for Cambridge exams. Learn when and how to apply these techniques.*

To succeed in Cambridge Reading papers (FCE, CAE, CPE), you need to master two key reading skills: Skimming and Scanning. You don't have time to read every word in detail from start to finish.

## WHAT IS SKIMMING?

Skimming is reading quickly to get the gist or main idea of the text.

When to use it:

- When you first look at a text to understand the topic.
- For matching headings to paragraphs.
- To identify the tone of the writer.

How to do it: Read the title, the first paragraph, the first sentence of each body paragraph (topic sentences), and the last paragraph. Don't worry about unknown words.

## WHAT IS SCANNING?

Scanning is reading quickly to find specific information.

When to use it:

- When looking for keywords from the questions (names, dates, numbers, specific nouns).
- In Multiple Matching tasks where you need to find correctly matched attributes.

How to do it: Move your eyes quickly over the text. Don't read sentences; look for the shape of the word or number you need.

## COMBINING THE STRATEGIES

In the exam, you should usually skim the text first to establish context. Then read the questions. Finally, scan the text to find the section where the answer is likely to be, and then read that specific section in detail (intensive reading) to determine the correct answer.

Practice these techniques with random articles online to improve your speed!

