

Skimming can be done in different ways, depending on the type and length of text. To skim a single paragraph, begin by reading the first sentence, which is most likely to state the topic of the paragraph.

Tips If you are not able to identify the main point of the paragraph from the first sentence, or if the first sentence indicates that there is more important information coming, skim your eyes quickly over the middle part of the paragraph looking out for:

- ✓ signposting expressions that signal key points such as 'however' and 'furthermore'
- ✓ adjectives and adverbs that indicate importance, such as 'significant', 'main' or 'interestingly'

Tips

If these are not present, read the last sentence in the paragraph, which often acts as a conclusion.



Exercise 1

Read the paragraph below about attraction and friendship and answer questions 1 and 2 below.

- 1 Which sentence most clearly states the main idea?
- 2 Which words elsewhere in the paragraph indicate that you might want to read more?

'There is a good chance that you will get to like people who are in a reasonable proximity to where you live or work – think of this as the neighbourhood factor. In a famous study of a student housing complex led by Leon Festinger (who is also associated with the concept of cognitive dissonance discussed in Chapter 6), it emerged that people were more likely to choose as friends those living in the same building and even on the same floor. (Festinger, Schachter & Black, 1950). Subtle architectural features, such as the location of a staircase, can also affect the process of making acquaintances and establishing friendships.'

Source: Extracts from Vaughan & Hogg, Psychology © 2011 Pearson Australia pp 544–545, 537–538, 498.

To skim a longer text which is divided into paragraphs, you normally read:

- the first paragraph (or introductory section) completely
- the first sentence or line of each paragraph in the main body of the text
- the last paragraph (or concluding section) completely.



Exercise 2

Imagine that you are researching the factors that influence a person's choice of life partner, and that you have found the text below. The first and last paragraphs have been reproduced along with the first sentences of the middle five paragraphs. Read the extracts and answer questions 1–4.

- 1 Is this article relevant to your research topic?
- 2 Do the authors present the theory in a favourable light?
- 3 Which part of the text might you use to complete the sentence: 'According to social exchange theory, one of the factors that may influence a person's choice of life partner is the extent to which they can exchange resources such as "...'?"
- 4 Which paragraph would you read completely if you wanted to know more about how people decide whether a relationship is better or worse than other relationships they have had in the past?

'Is there a relationships marketplace out there, where we humans can satisfy our needs to interact, be intimate, 'love and be loved in return'? While social exchange theory is one of a family of theories based on behaviourism, it is also an approach to studying interpersonal relationships that incorporates *interaction*. Further, it deals directly with close relationships.

If two people are to progress in a relationship it will be because they gain from the way that they exchange benefits (i.e. rewards). [...]

A relationship is an ongoing everyday activity. [...]

Broadly speaking, resources exchanged include: goods, information, love, money, services and status (Foa and Foa, 1975). [...]

Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) *The social psychology of groups* was a major work that underpinned much subsequent research. [...]

A final important concept in social exchange theory is the part played by each person's comparison level or CL – a standard against which all of one's relationships are judged. [...]

Does exchange theory have a future? In summary, the answer to this question is yes. A strong feature of exchange theory is that it accommodates variations in relationships, including:

- differences between people in how they perceive rewards and costs (you might think that free advice from your partner is rewarding, others might not);
- differences within the person based on varying CLs, both over time and across different contexts (I like companionship, but I prefer to shop for clothes alone).

The theory is frequently used. For example, Rusbult has shown how *investment* includes the way that rewards, costs and CLs are related to both satisfaction and commitment in a relationship (Rusbult, Martz & Agnew, 1998).'

Source: Extracts from Vaughan & Hogg, *Psychology* © 2011 Pearson Australia pp 544–545, 537–538, 498.

Scanning

If you need to find a specific piece of information quickly, you can scan a text for it. To scan efficiently, decide which text – and which part of the text – is most likely to contain the information you are looking for. If necessary, skim the text first in order to get a mental map of how the information is laid out. Then allow your eyes to quickly run over the surface of the text looking for key words relating to the information you are looking for.



Exercise 3

Imagine that you are continuing your research on the factors that influence a person's choice of life partner and that you are looking for answers to questions 1–3. Scan the text to find the answers. Then answer question 4 at the end of the passage.

- 1 Which scholar is associated with the 'law of attraction'?
- 2 When did Newcomb study college students' attitudes and attractions?
- 3 What does 'reinforcing' mean in this context?

'There are other important psychological factors that exert some control over attraction. In an early study by Theodore Newcomb (1961), students received rent-free housing in return for filling in questionnaires before they arrived about their attitudes and values. Changes in interpersonal attraction were measured over the course of a semester. Initially, attraction went hand-in-hand with proximity – students liked those who lived close by. Then another factor came into play: having compatible attitudes. [...]

Newcomb found that, as the semester progressed, the focus shifted to similarity of attitudes. Students with similar pre-acquaintance attitudes became more attractive. This is logical, because in real life it usually takes some time to discover whether or not a housemate thinks and feels in the same way about a variety of social issues.

Byrne and Clore have carried out extensive research dealing with the connection between sharing attitudes with another person and liking them (e.g. Byrne, 1971; Clore & Byrne, 1974). Attitudes that were markedly similar were an important ingredient in maintaining a relationship. The results were so reliable and consistent that Clore (1976) formulated a 'law of attraction' – attraction towards a person bears a linear relationship to the actual proportion of similar attitudes shared with that person. This law was thought to be applicable to more than just attitudes. Anything that other people do that agrees with your perception of things is rewarding, i.e. reinforcing. The more other people agree, the more they act as reinforcers for you and the more you like them. For example, if you suddenly discover that someone you are going out with likes the same obscure rock band as you, your liking for that person will increase.'

Source: Extracts from Vaughan & Hogg, Psychology © 2011 Pearson Australia pp 544–545, 537–538, 498.

- 4 Imagine you wanted to find out more about proximity as a factor that influences attraction – would you read the section before or after this extract?