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Part A

Reading Skills

阅读技能

Unit 1

Skimming to Get the Gist of a Passage

快速浏览以获取文章大意



Study Skills 学习技能

善于阅读的人通常都有一个特征,即:他能采用灵活的方式去阅读文章。换言之,他知道如何采用不同的阅读技能去处理不同的阅读材料,或是因为阅读的目的不同,他采取的阅读方式也就不一样。在本单元里,我们将学习一种快速阅读技能:skimming。

skimming 是指快速浏览所读材料,以便获得文章的主旨大意。这种浏览技能不要求读者把文章全部读完,而是有选择性地阅读。一旦获得文章的主旨大意,便可停止阅读。我们知道,一篇文章既有其主要信息,又有次要信息,Skimming 的目的就是要选择地快速浏览以便获得文章的主要信息。那么,选择浏览文章的哪些部分呢?在 skimming 中,为了尽快获得所读文章的主旨大意,应重点阅读文章的以下部分:

- Title (标题)
- Sub - title(s) (次标题)
- Abstract(摘要)
- Introductory paragraph (引言段落)
- First, second and last sentence of paragraphs (段落的首句、第二句和末尾句)
- Concluding sentence or paragraph (结束句或结束段)

一篇文章有可能并不包括所有这些部分,但至少有一些。只要我们仔细阅读这些部分,就能迅速获得所读文章的主旨大意。一个段落的其他句子可以跳读过去,也可选读个别单词、词组或数字。

一个段落通常只有一个主题,有一个句子是主题句(Topic sentence),该句包含这个段落的

主题和主题思想,其他句子是用来说明主题思想的细节,如事实、举例,等等。主题句通常是段落的首句或结尾句,但有时也可能在段落的中间。另外,读者有时会读到一些没有主题句的段落,这就要求读者多读几个句子或短语,然后归纳其主题思想。在 skimming 的时候,要快速移动眼睛,尽快找到段落的关键句子,避免阅读文章的细节,要以最快的阅读速度获取文章的大意。由此可以看出,skimming 的特点是:

- 1) 快速浏览;
- 2) 有选择性地阅读;并有意忽视文章的某些部分;
- 3) 不要求对文章有很高的理解率,但正确理解率不应低于 50%。

skimming 这种技能要通过大量的练习才能熟悉掌握,要养成快读的良好习惯。通过练习,经常性地检查自己的阅读速度和理解的正确率,如果没有对文章的理解,无论以什么样的方式,或以多快的速度阅读都是毫无意义的。另外,在练习中采用定时阅读(Timed Reading),是培养这种技能的一个有效方法。

在快速 skimming 中,应避免一些不良的阅读习惯。我们知道,在有效的阅读过程中,一是眼睛要快速搜索,二是大脑要积极活动,而身体其他部位的运动常常会减慢阅读的速度。我们经常看到一种不好的阅读习惯,读者用手指、铅笔或用尺子指着读的单词,这样只能使自己把注意力集中在孤立的单词上而非句意上,同时,也减慢了阅读速度。另外一种常见的错误阅读方式是读者不断地移动自己的头,不必要的身体运动同样会影响阅读速度。其实,眼睛的可视范围完全能够覆盖一页书的文字,没有必要让头随着眼睛的移动而移动。还有的人在阅读时习惯把单词的读音发出来,虽然读出来的声音很轻,但也没有必要。这样做的不利之处就是把阅读速度局限在说话的语速上,从而减慢阅读速度。有关试验表明,默读的速度是说话时语速的两倍。因此,应养成默读的习惯以提高阅读速度。



Illustration

举例讲解

现在,我们列举若干篇阅读短文,具体讲解如何运用 skimming 这种技能去获取所读材料的主要信息。

◆ Sample 1 Skimming for the Topic Sentence

Directions: Read the following paragraph quickly. Then underline the topic sentence of the paragraph.

There are several different kinds of classes on college and university campuses. Professors usually teach large undergraduate classes. They give formal lectures. Students have to listen and take notes.

Then teaching assistants (T.A.s) lead discussion groups. In graduate seminars, small groups of students discuss their ideas with their instructors and classmates.

该段落的首句是主题句。在这个主题句中,“ kinds of classes ”是本段的主题,主题大意是“ There are several different kinds of classes ”。接下来,介绍了教授是讲什么样的课,而助教们又是讲什么课。后面这些句子是具体介绍各种课的细节。在 skimming 中,需要迅速判断文章的关键词和关键句子,这有助于确定文章中哪些是主要信息,哪些是次要信息。

◆ Sample 2 Skimming for Main ideas of a Passage

Directions: Skim the following paragraphs quickly. Remember to read in phrases. Then circle the number of the main idea of each paragraph.

Laws

Most laws in the United States and Canada are similar to laws in other countries. For example, it is against the law everywhere to murder a person, and it is illegal to steal money. Everyone knows these laws, but immigrants, foreign students, or tourists in a new country may not know some of the local laws. Different places may have different laws: A legal act in Brazil, Korea, or France might be illegal in Toronto, Miami, or San Francisco.

- 1) It is against the law to murder a person or to steal.
- 2) Visitors do not always know the local laws of a new place.
- 3) Laws are usually different in different countries.

作者在第一段一开始就列举各国相同的一些法律,从而引出作者要论述的主题思想,即:本段中的转折句:but immigrants, foreign students, or tourists in a new country may not know some of the local laws. 因此,该段的主题大意是 2)。

In many cities in the United States, for instance, it is not legal to “jaywalk”. This law may seem strange to visitors. Sometimes they cross a street, and a police officer gives them a ticket. Then they need to pay a fine of \$ 10 to \$ 25 within ten days. They soon learn to cross a street only in a crosswalk or at a corner. It's against the law to cross in the middle of the street.

- 1) It's illegal to jaywalk in many American cities.
- 2) Foreign visitors get a lot of tickets.
- 3) Foreign students think local laws are strange.

第二段具体介绍美国的一条法律,即:“jaywalk”在美国的许多城市都是违法的。本段的首句应是主题句。由于外来人不知道这条法律,所以常常因此而违反交通规则,受到罚款。本段

的关键词是“jaywalk”，所以，第二段的大意是 1)。

Most people know that states in the United States have different laws about the legal drinking age; this age varies, but in most states no one under twenty – one can buy alcohol, even beer or wine. Also, in most U.S. cities, it is illegal to drink in public. Of course, liquor is legal in restaurants and bars, but it's against the law to drink a can of beer, for instance, on a public street. Some people put the can in a paper bag and drink; nobody can see the beer, but it still isn't legal. In addition, it is illegal to have an open liquor bottle inside a car.

- 1) In most American cities, you may drink liquor only in homes, restaurants, and bars.
- 2) It is against the law for people under twenty-one to drink wine.
- 3) States and cities in the United States have different laws about alcohol.

第三段主要讲美国各州和各城市对饮酒都有不同的法律限制。作者列举了若干条禁止饮酒的法律。故正确答案应是 3)。

◆ Sample 3 Skimming for Titles

Direction: Skimming the following passage quickly. Then put each of the following titles on the line provided.

Titles:

- 1) Witches: A Symbol of Halloween
- 2) The First Halloween
- 3) Halloween Today
- 4) The Origin of Halloween Customs

A Traditional Holiday

Paragraph 1: _____

Hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, the Celts — the inhabitants of France and the British Isles — held a festival at the beginning of every winter for the Lord of the Dead. These people believed that this god ruled the world in winter, when he called together the ghosts of dead people. On October 31, these spirits of the dead came back in the forms of animals, with very bad ghosts as black cats. At their festival on this day, the Celts used to make big fires to frighten the ghosts and chase them away. This celebration was the beginning of the holiday of Halloween.

Paragraph 2: _____

The Romans, who ruled the British Isles after the birth of Christ, also held a celebration at the be-

ginning of winter. Because winter was harvest time, the Romans brought apples and nuts for the goddess of gardens. Later, The Christians added their customs to those of the Celts and the Romans. They had a religious holiday on November 1 for the saints (the unusually good people in Christianity), which they called All Hallows' Day the evening before this day was All Hallows' Even ("holy evening"); later the name became Halloween.

Paragraph 3: _____

Long ago in Britain people used to go to wise old women called "witches" to learn about the future. They believed that these witches had the power to tell the future and to use magic words to protect people or change them. There were many beliefs about witches, who are now a symbol of Halloween. For example, people believed witches flew on broomsticks to big, secret meetings, where they ate, sang, and danced. The Christians tried to stop people from believing in witches, but many uneducated people, especially in the countryside, held on to their beliefs.

Paragraph 4: _____

When people came to North America from the British Isles, they brought their Halloween customs with them. Today, Halloween is a night when children dress up like ghosts, witches, devils, and so on. They go from house to house in their costumes, ring doorbells, and shout, "Trick or treat!". People give them candy, apples, gum, and the children have a good time. But most children have no idea that their holiday has such a long history.

"Title" 通常都是表明文章主题的关键词。它是对一篇文章的高度概括,包含了文章要阐述的中心思想。因此,"Title"与文章的主题大意是紧密相关的。换言之,找到文章的大意,便找到了文章的"Title"。下面来分析以上四个段落的大意及其标题的关系。

第一段介绍了最早的 Halloween ("鬼节",或称之为"万圣节")。该段落的末尾句表明了本段的主题。因此,选择标题 2)。

第二段谈到基督教的教徒们把他们的一种庆祝活动与最早的 Halloween 融为一体,形成了一种风俗文化,从此,人们便开始了庆祝 Halloween 这个节日的习惯,"Halloween"这个词从此以后就传开了。因此,选择标题 4)。

第三段中的关键词是哪一个呢?在浏览这一段时会发现"witches"(巫婆)这个词出现的频率很高,而且该段落都是围绕着这个主题词在议论。人们认为,witches 有超常的能力,她们能够预见未来,通过念咒语来保护或改变人们,因此,尽管受到基教徒的反对,但人们还是信奉那些 witches。由此,标题 1)是该段落的答案。

第四段的第二句明确表明了这段的主题思想,即:今天人们是如何庆祝"Halloween"节日的。所以标题 3)应是该段的答案。

◆ Sample 4 设置 Skimming 练习的“Scorecard”

在练习 skimming 技能时,最好设定一个目标,比如,阅读速度要达到多少,理解正确率要达到多少。通常,这个目标可以设定在开始练习 skimming 时速度的四倍左右,随着阅读速度的加快,目标可以逐渐提高。那么,如何跟踪了解自己的进步呢?可以在每篇文章后设置一个“Scorecard”,记录阅读时间、阅读速度和理解率。

Scorecard

No:	
Title	
Reading Time	
(Minutes and Seconds)	_____
Reading Speed	
(Words per minute)	_____
Comprehension	
(Number correct)	_____



Practice

实战练习

以下的若干练习旨在加强 Skimming 技能的训练,养成快速阅读的良好习惯。练习后附有参考答案。

◆ Practice 1

Directions: Read the following three paragraphs. Remember to read in phrases. Then circle the number of the main idea of each paragraph.

Evenings with the Family: Present and Past

What happens to the typical American family every evening after dinner? First, everyone argues

about the dishes. Then they disappear into the living room. They sit there for the rest of the evening. They are quiet; nobody says anything to anyone. They stare at a small screen until their eyes are tired and red. The “boob tube” is the center of attention.

1. Americans argue about dishes.
2. Television influences family life in the United States.
3. Television causes red eyes.

When I was a child, we used to spend hot summer evenings on the front porch. We didn't have air conditioning, and the house was always too warm, but there was usually a cool, pleasant breeze out on the porch. We children used to play games or read comic books there while my father sat in his rocking chair and rocked back and forth for hours. Sometimes he smoked his pipe or did the crossword puzzle from the newspaper. Mother used a paper fan when there was no breeze. Sometimes she cleaned strawberries. Then later in the evening, she used to take them into the kitchen and reappear in a few minutes with big dishes of strawberries and cream.

1. The front porch used to be a nice place for the family in the summer.
2. The front porch was always very hot in the summer.
3. My parents usually read the newspaper on the porch in the summer.

The front porch was also a kind of social center. There were special “rules” for evenings on the porch. Everyone knew the rules, but nobody said anything about them. For example, when people in our town took walks on summer evenings, they often used to stop for a moment at the bottom step of our porch. This pause was almost a social rule; it was like a knock on the front door. Then my father always said, “Come on up and sit down!”. This was another “rule”. He always used those exact words. Then Mother brought out lemonade or iced tea-never coffee or juice or alcohol. Everyone talked about the local baseball team, gardening, and the hot weather; we children learned our first lessons in small talk on the porch.

1. People talked only about important things on our porch.
2. There were certain social “rules” on the front porch.
3. We never used to drink coffee or alcohol.

◆ Practice 2

Directions: Read the following section quickly. Then circle the number of the one main idea of each section.

A Murder Mystery

The manager led the detective to his office. Inside, there were two men and a woman. They were

silent.

Althea Pennwright, Ambrose's widow, was not crying. In fact, she seemed quite calm and relaxed. She offered Edward Grimsley her hand.

"You're going to find my husband's murderer," she said. "How nice".

Next, Grimsley met Gregory Welles. Welles was the owner of a famous gourmet food restaurant in New York.

"Ambrose Pennwright was my best friend," Welles said, "and his murder is terribly unfortunate". Grimsley noticed a pleasant expression on Welles' face. There was no sign of sadness.

Then the manager introduced Grimsley to Horace Goodbody, a vegetarian chef with his own program called "How to Cook for Health".

"Ambrose was like a brother to me", Horace Goodbody said. "He got me the job on my TV show. I hope you find the killer soon". Goodbody's expression was similar to the widow's and the restaurant owner's; he didn't appear to be upset.

Question 1: Which of the following is the main idea of the section?

1. Althea Pennwright was Ambrose's widow.
2. Gregory Welles owned a gourmet restaurant in New York.
3. Horace Goodbody had a TV show about vegetarian cooking.
4. The three people in the hotel office did not seem upset about Ambrose's murder.

Grimsley shook his head. "I'm confused," he said. "You're all talking about the murder of poor Mr Pennwright, but nobody is sure it was murder. Possibly he died of natural causes".

Althea Pennwright stood up. Her face became hard and unpleasant. "A natural cause is possible, but I think murder is more probable. Do you want the truth? Everyone hated my husband. He was rich, intelligent, and powerful, but he was a terrible person. None of us is upset about his death. Unfortunately, we all have our reasons..."

Grimsley waited silently for a moment.

"Gregory Welles, for example, was afraid of my husband," Mrs Pennwright continued, "The food in Mr Welles' restaurant looks and tastes wonderful, but the quality is very poor. It contains chemicals and is worse than junk food. My husband found out and was writing an article about it when he came here.

Welles stared at her unhappily.

"Horace Goodbody," she continued, "is not an honest person. He has a very popular TV program. Every vegetarian in America watches it. However, in real life, Horace's diet consists mainly of fast food. His diet is not healthful. In fact, he isn't even a vegetarian. My husband was planning to tell the world about Mr Goodbody in his next article. Horace knew this; thus, he was afraid to lose his TV show".

Goodbody had an unhappy expression on his face.

"And you, Mrs Pennwright?" Mr Grimsley asked. "Why did you hate your husband?"

Question 2: Which of the following is the main idea of the section?

1. The detective was confused about the three people in the office.
2. The three people all hated Ambrose Pennwright for different reasons.
3. Gregory Welles was afraid of Ambrose Pennwright because the food in Gregory's restaurant was not very good.
4. Horace Goodbody ate unhealthy fast food.

◆ Practice 3

Directions: Read the following three paragraphs quickly and write the proper topic title on the line provided.

Here are three topic titles:

1. A "Normal" Kind of Daredevil
2. The Adventure of Dangerous Sports
3. A Chemical Cause

Dangerous Sports

Paragraph 1: _____

For most people, playing tennis or going to the gym is a good way to exercise and relax. However, some people are not satisfied with such "boring" sports. They prefer dangerous sports like mountain climbing, scuba diving, or hang gliding. These daredevils love the adventure of reaching the top of the highest mountain, swimming underwater in dangerous areas of the ocean, or jumping off a mountain and silently gliding down to flat land. They feel most "alive" when there is the possibility that they might die the next minute.

Paragraph 2: _____

Why do these people participate in such dangerous sports? There are many answers. Some daredevils are actually very careful. They examine the potential dangers, pay attention to both their physical and mental health, and carefully check their equipment. Often, they choose a specific sport because they have always been frightened of it, and they do not want to be scared of dying either.

Paragraph 3: _____

Other daredevils are very different from "normal" people, for example, feel nervous before doing something dangerous, afraid during the event, and excited afterward. Many daredevils, on the other hand, feel so excited during the dangerous action that they decide to do it again and again. They are addicted to excitement as other people are addicted to drugs or alcohol. It is possible that many daredevils

have slightly higher amounts of certain chemicals in their bodies, but scientists haven't studied this enough yet to be sure.

◆ Practice 4

Directions: Read each of the following three paragraphs quickly. Then write the main idea of each paragraph on the line provided.

Smart Shopping Advice for Consumers

Most mothers have a good piece of advice: Never go into a supermarket hungry! If you go shopping for food before lunchtime, you'll probably buy more than you plan to. Unfortunately, however, just this advice isn't enough for consumers these days. Modern shoppers need an education in how — and how not — to buy things at the grocery store. First, you should check the weekly newspaper ads. Find out the items that are on sale and decide if you really need these things. In other words, don't buy anything just because it's cheaper than usual! Next, in the market, carefully read the information on the package, and don't let words like "New and Improved!" or "All Nature" on the front of a package influence you. Instead, read the list of ingredients on the back. Third, compare prices; that is, you should examine the prices of both different brands and different sizes of the same brand.

The main idea: _____

Generic Items and Brand Names

Another suggestion for consumers is to buy *generic items* instead of *famous brands*. *Generic items* in supermarkets come in plain packages. These products are cheaper because manufacturers don't spend much money on packaging or advertising. The quality, however, is usually identical to the quality of well-known name brands. In the same way, in buying clothes, you can often find high quality and low prices in brands that are not famous. Shopping in discount clothing stores can also help you save a lot of money. Although these stores aren't very attractive, and they usually do not have individual dressing rooms, not only are the prices low, but you can often find the same famous brands that you find in the high-priced department stores.

The main idea: _____

Intelligent Consumerism

Wise consumers read advertisements and watch TV commercials, but they do this with one advan-

tage: knowledge of the psychology behind the ads. In other words, well-informed consumers watch for information and check for misinformation. They ask themselves questions: Is the advertiser hiding something in small print at the bottom of the page? Is there any real information in the commercial, or is the advertiser simply showing an attractive image? Is this product more expensive than it should be because it has a famous name? With the answers to these questions, consumers can make a wide choice.

The main idea: _____

◆ Practice 5

Directions: Skimming the section, looking for main ideas and a few details. When you finish, enter your reading time and speed on the Scorecard. Then, do the following comprehension questions.

Dinosaurs

The world is full of people. They live on deserts and in jungles, on mountains and plains. They live all over.

But millions of years ago, when there were no people on earth, the world was full of reptiles instead. Dinosaurs, members of the reptile family, swarmed over the lands. Dinosaurs wallowed in the swamps. Serpents swam the seas and flying reptiles soared in the air. Even the few other kinds of animals, such as the first birds and the first of the furry animals, in some ways were like reptiles.

How did it come about that reptiles were once the most important animals on earth?

The story can begin about 400 million years ago. By that time the earth was four billion years old, and plants and animals were already living in the oceans.

The lands were bare. But some plants were struggling out of the seas and were making themselves over for life on land.

They had to change from limp weeds to stalks that could stand up. To keep from drying, they had to learn to send roots into the soil for water.

Later, when a few plants were growing on the beaches, some fishes sought a life on land too. They grew lungs to breathe air and changed fins to legs.

By the time 100 million years had passed, the naked earth was clothed in green plants. In those first forests lived amphibians, animals that spent most of their lives on land even though they were born in water.

It was summer all the time. Around great swamps grew forests of tree ferns. Mosses and delicate ferns carpeted the forest floors. Horsetail rushes grew tall along the sluggish creeks. These plants no longer needed to live in water. But they did have to live close to flowing water so that new plants could start growing from the spores of the old plants.

Here and there, a new kind of tree was already growing. It was a cycad (SI-kad) and grew from

seeds instead of spores. The seeds did not need flowing water to start growing. Cycads were free to grow anywhere.

In among the trees flitted giant dragonflies. Cockroaches, as big as your hand, scuttled in the rotting underbrush.

In this green and quiet world lived amphibians. Their ancestors were the fish that had crawled out of the seas to try to live on land. Like most of the plants, these animals still lived a double life, partly in water, partly on land. They were born in water as tadpoles. As they grew, they developed lungs and could breathe air, so they crawled out to live on land. But they always went back to water to lay the eggs out of which new tadpoles hatched.

Those fat and lazy amphibians were the grandfathers of a mighty race of animals. For, from one kind of them came the first of the reptiles.

The first reptiles looked and acted very much like the amphibians. But they were different. They laid their eggs on land and, as a matter of fact, they could not breathe in water. They were the first animals on earth free to roam anywhere.

The world seemed to be a lazy, quiet place. But the earth is always changing.

A mighty force which people do not yet quite understand began to press against both sides of the continents. The earth's skin, along some weak places, was squeezed up into giant folds, and mountains were made.

In a long chain from Newfoundland all the way to Alabama, the Appalachians wrinkled up. As the lands were rising, the swamps began to drain off. The weather became colder and drier.

This took millions of years to happen.

When that mountain-building time ended, the long-lasting summer was gone. Gone were the swamps edged with giant tree ferns and tall rushes.

Gone, too, were the amphibians.

But some of the reptiles managed to live.

From one kind of these, a two-legged creature with small hands, came the first dinosaurs.

Some of these dinosaurs, small and lively, ran about the mud flats of the Connecticut Valley. Later, the mud, tracked all over with their birdlike footprints, turned to stone. Nowadays, many people in New England have walks and terraces of flagstone in which these dinosaurs footprints can still be seen.

Gradually, after the first dinosaurs appeared, the earth was becoming a more comfortable place on which to live. Frost and wind and rain were wearing the mountains down, and the weather became warmer and rainier all over the world.

The Arctic Sea came washing down into western America. When it flowed back, it left behind great puddles of swamps and lakes.

This new world suited the once small race of dinosaurs. Now, many different kinds lived far and wide over all the lands of the earth.

It was a world of reptiles.

In the uplands of what people now call Colorado, South Dakota, Wyoming, Oklahoma and Utah,

cycads, with big and showy flowers, grew everywhere. There were sparse woods of cypress and ginkgo trees, too.

The first birds, about the size of small crows, were already flapping from tree to tree. Their ancestors had been reptiles, so it is no wonder that they had long reptilian jaws full of reptilian teeth. They had long reptilian tails, but decorated with feathers. Only their feathers show that they were birds. And even those had developed from reptilian scales.

No songs filled the woods, for birds could not yet sing.

Reading Time: _____

Reading Speed: _____

Comprehension: _____

Answer these questions about the selection without looking back.

1. The story you just read is about what period of time?
 - A. When reptiles were the most important animals on the earth.
 - B. When insects were the most important animals on the earth.
 - C. When birds were the most important animals on the earth.
2. Plants of that time that moved to living on land _____
 - A. had to grow flowers.
 - B. had to grow roots.
 - C. had to change to limp weeds.
3. The changes that happened to the life on the earth took place over a period of _____
 - A. a few weeks.
 - B. a few months.
 - C. millions of years.
4. Millions of years ago mountain ranges were made _____
 - A. by wind leaving dirt in piles.
 - B. by rivers washing down the dirt.
 - C. by the earth pushing up its skin into giant folds.
5. After the mountain-building time the weather became _____
 - A. warmer and wetter.
 - B. warmer and drier.
 - C. colder and drier.