Skimming and Scanning

What Is Skimming and Scanning?
Skimming and Scanning requires a reader to look quickly and find the most important features and information in a text.

Why Would I Teach This Strategy?
As students are assigned greater amounts of reading, given more opportunities for research, and asked to read content texts with a significant amount of information, knowing how to skim and scan becomes a critical reading/study skill. Acquisition of this skill will enable students to allocate study time to the portions of the text that meet their reading purposes.

How Does it Work?
1. Give students a reading assignment that is expository, such as a chapter of the textbook.
2. Prior to reading the entire text, ask students to work in pairs to skim and scan the assigned reading by looking at the title, the headings and subheadings, the visuals (charts, graphs, photographs, art), the boldfaced words, and the first and last paragraphs. Allow several minutes for students to complete this task, then ask them to discuss and decide on what they think this reading will be about.
3. Using a Skimming and Scanning form (see Appendix), engage the whole class in compiling their questions and comments in the First Impressions column.
4. Ask students to examine these first impressions and write down several facts they discovered in this limited reading. Compile the facts in the Fast Facts column.
5. Ask students to look at the class chart of first impressions and fast facts, and determine what they believe will be the important points or questions (Final Thoughts) that will be answered from reading this chapter.
6. At this point, you could assess students’ ability to use text features and critical thinking as part of the Skimming and Scanning process by assigning a topic and asking them which parts of the text they would read to find out more information about it. Discussion of the strategies used to quickly determine where and what to read will help solidify students’ skills in Skimming and Scanning.

Research/Origins

References/Further Reading