

### **Skimming techniques**

Skimming should not be confused with reading, but it is a useful reading technique. It involves allowing the eyes to break away from line-by-line movements and to move more freely across and down the page.

There are at least two ways of achieving this:

- **Sampling** takes the form of reading parts of the material quickly in order to form an impression of the whole. It focuses on the first sentence of each paragraph because this is where the important information in each paragraph is most likely to be.
- **Locating** is vertical reading. It does not look very vertical as the eyes are continually drawn over to the right. This is because the material is not printed vertically but horizontally from left to right. The eyes then have to correct for this by moving diagonally to the left. So you get a zigzag pattern of eye movements. This kind of skimming will only work well if you have already identified key words and phrases and are actively looking for them. If they are there or if there is anything else which is relevant or of interest, your eyes will be drawn to that information.

### **Skimming strategy**

You have understood how skimming is achieved. The next thing you need to consider is an effective strategy that you can use in future skimming tasks. Below are some steps many readers take when they skim.

1. Identify key words and/or questions you wish to have answered
2. See how the material is organized with the help of headings
3. Organize the key words and/or questions in the way the material is organized
4. Use headings and/or the beginnings of paragraphs to find the most likely places to read
5. Go looking in the most likely places first
6. Find the main points before going into the details required
7. Repeat the process if necessary

### **Practice makes perfect**

You need to keep practising. Find some time every day – ten minutes is better than none – to try out the strategy and to refine it if necessary. You should also keep a record of your results in your notebook so that you can check your progress from time to time.