

How to read non-fiction

Sometimes you read non-fiction texts to find a particular piece of information. On other occasions, you might read the whole text and think about the information it gives. How you read a non-fiction text depends on why you are reading it.

Before you begin reading, it is usually a good idea to skim through to get an idea of what it is about. You can see what aspects of the topic are covered or what type of text it is and how it is organised.

You can start to think about what you already know about the topic and about similar texts you have read. You can **predict** what the text might tell you and think of questions that you hope it will answer.

Skimming through the text will also help you to find particular pieces of information if you need to.

Using titles and headings

Titles and headings tell you what a text is about. They may also give clues about the type of text or its purpose. Ask yourself these questions.

- What am I reading?
- Why am I reading it?
- What do I know about this topic?
- What do I want to find out?

Getting an overview

Skim through the text looking at headings, sub-headings and illustrations. Get an idea of the content and how the text is organised. Start to make predictions about the writer's purpose and what the text will tell you.

For example, here are the headings from a book about cars, and some questions you could ask yourself.

Horseless carriages: the first motorcars

The start of mass production

The golden age of motoring

Designs today: speed, comfort and convenience

The future of motoring

- How is it organised?
- What will it tell me?
- What won't it tell me?
- How will I read it and find the information I want?

Test yourself

Answer the four questions in the section 'Getting an overview' about the book on cars.

Remember

Skim through the text to get an overview before you read it. Start to predict and ask questions.

