WHICH TYPE OF READING TECHNIQUE SHOULD I USE IN THE IELTS READING EXAM?

There are three reading techniques people use for different purposes: SKIMMING, SCANNING & INTENSIVE READING.

1. Which one do people use to see what time their flight is at the computer screen in an airport showing when their plane is due to take off? Why do they use this particular technique?
2. Which one do people use when they’re in a bookshop looking at books and the back of book covers in order to decide what book they’re going to buy? Why do they use this particular technique?
3. Which one should you use in the IELTS reading exam and why?

a) SCANNING – because they are scanning for a particular FLIGHT NUMBER AT A PARTICULAR TIME; they are FOCUSSING ONLY on reading information that is IMPORTANT OR RELEVANT for them.

b) SKIMMING – because they are trying to get a VERY GENERAL IDEA about what the book is about and / or about whether they like the WRITER’S STYLE OF WRITING. Also, they’re not in a library, they don’t have time to read the whole book or even a single page!

c) INTENSIVE READING – because you need to read VERY CAREFULLY in the reading exam to make sure you’ve understood both the question and the sentences that relate to it in the reading text.

1. In which of these three techniques do you read quickly looking for SPECIFIC KEY WORDS OR INFORMATION?
2. In which of these three techniques do you read quickly to get JUST the MAIN IDEA of what the topic is about?
3. In which of these three techniques do you read carefully and slowly, TWO OR THREE TIMES to make sure that you’ve understood both the question and the text?

A mistake students often make in the IELTS reading exam is to SCAN a text and its questions; what they do is to MATCH what they see are KEY WORDS with The SAME WORDS in the questions. This can be a problem for all IELTS reading question types, but is a particular problem with MULTIPLE CHOICE and TRUE, FALSE, NOT GIVEN.

1] **SCAN the paragraph below, read it FAST**

**Look at, the KEY WORDS in the text have been underlined and then have been MATCHED with the SAME WORDS in the question.**

**JUST try to answer the questions. Did you get the right answers? Yes!? You were lucky!**

*THE CHANGING OCEAN*

Saline water = salt water

*Global warming of the oceans leads to a rise in sea levels caused by the melting of the ice caps. During this process, fresh water from the melting ice caps flows into the sea reducing the concentration of* ***salt*** *in the water and thus the sea’s density. Saline-dense water normally sinks to the sea bed and then* ***travels*** *to* ***warmer*** *equatorial regions. At the same time, the warmer, less* ***densely******saline*** *water in* ***warmer******parts******of******the******world******travels*** *along the sea* ***surface*** *to the poles, where its* ***salinity*** *increases and the* ***water*** *consequently sinks. However, as the salinity of* ***polar*** *water decreases, this ocean process slows down. The cycle has an oxygenating effect on the water and also carries* ***nutrients*** *from* ***deeper******water*** *to the* ***surface****. Any slowing down of the cycle may have dramatic consequences for sea life.*

*Global warming leads to*

1. *fewer* ***nutrients*** *being brought from* ***deeper*** *water to the* ***surface****.*
2. *a reduction in the speed at which* ***saline****-rich water and less* ***saline****-rich water circulates.*
3. *less* ***saline-dense*** *water* ***travelling*** *along the* ***surface*** *to the* ***polar*** *regions.*
4. *a rise in the* ***salinity*** *of water at the* ***poles****.*

*Under normal conditions water containing a large amount of* ***salt***

1. ***travels*** *along the surface to the poles.*
2. *draws* ***nutrients*** *down into the depths of the* ***sea****.*
3. *moves along the bottom of the* ***sea****.*
4. *is found in* ***warmer******parts******of******the******world****.*

If you just match words in the text and question without really trying to understand PROPERLY BOTH THE QUESTION AND THE TEXT, chances are you’ll choose the wrong answer.

**Can you find the right answer this way? NO? What should you do?**

**2] Read the SAME paragraph ABOVE again and the question INTENSIVELY. NOW, try to choose the correct answer. Were you more certain you got the right answer this time? Why? Why not?**

**3] Now read the paragraph below INTENSIVELY and answer the TRUE, FALSE, NOT GIVEN question.**

*A second alarming discovery is that the sea itself has traditionally played a role in reducing global warming. Oceans hold within them a certain amount of carbon dioxide. As the temperature of the sea rises, so its capacity to hold CO2 falls, thus the problem of global warming is further increased. However, there is a piece of good news to counter this: fresh water from melting ice caps with lower saline levels enables the sea to hold more carbon dioxide, so the problem could be offset to some extent.*

***TRUE, FALSE OR NOT GIVEN?***

1. *Global warming is made worse when sea water warms and releases CO2 into the air.*
2. *The salt in sea water contains the CO2 found in the sea.*
3. *A lot of salt comes from the water in the ice caps.*