

ONLINE GUIDE

Real-World Learning Strategies

Reading textbooks consumes a large portion of your time and effort right now. However, you will not always be in college and in the world outside of college you will need to read a variety of materials to remain current in your job, keep up with world events, and seek information for personal interests and household matters. Since your time will always be valuable, you will want to get the most information in the least possible amount of time. This resource guide will show you how to locate information quickly, how to avoid reading everything in a source, and how to deal with the most common sources of information—magazines and newspapers.

How to Locate Information Quickly

Scanning is a method of searching for a specific piece of information when your only purpose is to locate that information. In fact, when you scan you are not at all interested in anything else on the page; you have no reason to notice or remember any other information.

How to Scan

Many people do not scan as efficiently as possible because they randomly search through material, hoping to stumble on the information they are seeking. Scanning in this way is time-consuming and frustrating, and it often forces the reader to “give up” and read the entire selection. The key to effective scanning is a systematic approach, described in the following steps:

1. Check the Organization Before you begin to scan, check to see how the article or material is organized.

For *graphics*, check the title of the item you are scanning and other labels, keys, and legends. They state what the graphics are intended to describe and tell you how it is presented.

For *prose selections*, notice the overall structure of the article so that you will be able to predict where in the article you can expect to find your information.

For *electronic sources*, scroll through the entire document to discover its overall organization.

2. Form Specific Questions Fix in your mind what you are looking for by forming specific questions about the topic. For example, when scanning for information about abortions in New York State, ask questions such as these:

- How many abortions were performed in a certain year?
- What rules and limitations restrict abortions?
- Where are most abortions performed?

3. Anticipate Word Clues Anticipate clues that may help you locate the answer more rapidly. For example, if you were trying to locate the population of New York City in an article on the populations of cities, you might expect the answer to appear in digits such as 2,304,710, or in words such as “two million” or “three million.” If you were looking for the name of a political figure in a newspaper article, you might expect to find two words, both capitalized. Table 1 (p. 3) lists additional clues for finding various types of information. Try to fix the image of your clue words or phrases in your mind as accurately as possible before you begin to scan.

4. Identify Likely Answer Locations Try to identify likely places where the information you are looking for might appear. You might be able to identify a column or section that contains the needed information. You might be able to eliminate certain sections, or you might be able to predict that the information will appear in a certain portion of the article.

5. Use a Systematic Pattern Scanning should be organized and systematic. Do not randomly skip around, searching for clues. Instead, rhythmically sweep your eyes through the material. The pattern or approach you use will depend on the material. For material printed in narrow six- or seven-word columns, such as newspaper articles, you might move your eyes straight down the middle, catching the phrases on each half of the line. For wider lines of print, a zigzag or Z pattern might be more effective. Using this pattern, you

TABLE 1 Clues for Scanning

Type of Information Needed	Clues	Examples
Statistics, amounts, quantities	Numbers (words or digits) words expressing quantities	1,389,000 gallons of oil . . .
Dates, times	Digits; clue words: before, after, during . . .	After 1986, . . .
Definitions	Boldface or italicized print; clue words: is referred to as, can be defined as, means, is termed; pairs of commas enclosing parenthetical information, dashes, parentheses	The playbill (poster) reviewed . . .
Reasons/causes	Clue words: because, consequently, for that reason, as a result; enumeration; one cause . . . , a second cause . . .	Consequently, air flows upward . . .
Names, places	Capitalized nouns; pairs of parenthetical commas	The famous general, George C. Marshall, . . .
Locations, positions	Capitalized nouns; clue words: besides, next to, adjacent, below, . . .	In Venezuela . . .
Characteristics	Items listed in a series separated by commas; synonyms; features, variables, qualities	Platinum is a steel-gray, malleable, ductile chemical element . . .
Process (How does . . .)	Clue words: first, then next . . . ; Enumeration: (1) . . . , (2) . . . , (3) . . .	First, blood is circulated . . .

would move your eyes back and forth, catching several lines in each movement. When you do come to the information you are looking for, clue words may seem to “pop out” at you.

6. Confirm Your Answer Once you think you have located your information, check to be sure you are correct. Read the sentence that contains the answer to confirm that it is the information you need. Often, headings and keywords seem to indicate that you have found your answer when in fact you have located related information, opposite information, or information for another year, country, or similar situation.

Scanning Lists, Charts, and Tables

All sorts of information is presented in lists, charts, and tables. Examples of columnar material include dictionaries, departure and arrival screens

in airports, TV listings, lists of course offerings, even grocery ads. Use the following techniques:

1. **Check to determine the overall organization and then see if it is divided in any particular way.** Notice whether column titles, headings, or any other clues are provided about the material’s organization. For instance, you would note that a TV program schedule is organized by day of the week, but that it is also arranged by time. In scanning a zip code directory, you would see that it is arranged alphabetically but that there is a separate alphabetical list for each state.
2. **Scan for a specific word, phrase, name, date, or place name.** For example, in checking the meaning of a term in *Taber’s Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary*, you are looking for a specific word. Similarly, in looking up a metric equivalent in the glossary of your physics textbook, your purpose is quite specific.
3. **Use the arrow scanning pattern; it is a straight-down-the-column pattern.**
4. **Focus on the first letter of each line until you reach the letter that begins the word you are looking for.** Then, focus on the first two letters until you reach the two-letter combination you are searching for. Successively widen your focus until you are looking for whole words.

**Exercise
1**

Directions: Scan the table shown in Figure 1 (see pp. 5–6) to answer each of the following questions.

1. How is this table organized?

2. What activity did adults participate in most in the last 12 months?
Least?

3. How many people participated in bingo once a week?

4. How many people attended music performances once a week?

5. What percentage of adults went to the beach in the past year?

FIGURE 1 Adult Participation in Selected Leisure Activities by Frequency: 2004

[In thousands (13,478 represents 13,478,000), except percent. For fall 2004. Based on sample and subject to sampling error; see source]

Activity	Participated in the last 12 months ¹		Frequency of participation							
			Two or more times a week		Once a week		Two to three times a month		Once a month	
	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent
Adult education courses	13,478	6.3	2,605	1.2	2,418	1.1	634	0.3	574	0.3
Album scrapbooking	8,901	4.2	537	0.3	539	0.3	1,094	0.5	1,648	0.8
Attend auto shows	16,631	7.8	151	0.1	321	0.2	577	0.3	683	0.3
Attend country music performances	11,227	5.3	115	0.1	114	0.1	151	0.1	391	0.2
Attend dance performances	7,921	3.7	198	0.1	111	0.1	240	0.1	300	0.1
Attend horse races	5,430	2.5	194	0.1	165	0.1	308	0.1	255	0.1
Attend music performances ²	30,115	14.1	250	0.1	471	0.2	1,167	0.6	3,480	1.6
Attend rock music performances	19,550	9.2	183	0.1	220	0.1	427	0.2	947	0.4
Backgammon	4,301	2.0	529	0.3	408	0.2	503	0.2	608	0.3
Baking	37,705	17.7	7,805	3.7	5,762	2.7	8,875	4.2	5,174	2.4
Barbecuing	68,462	32.1	10,637	5.0	10,476	4.9	16,390	7.7	9,191	4.3
Billiards/pool	18,302	8.6	1,689	0.8	1,470	0.7	2,139	1.0	2,121	1.0
Birdwatching	10,082	4.7	5,021	2.4	709	0.3	896	0.4	553	0.3
Board games	35,645	16.7	2,471	1.2	3,248	1.5	6,463	3.0	6,332	3.0
Book clubs	6,750	3.2	455	0.2	449	0.2	740	0.4	2,114	1.0
Ceramics/pottery	2,439	1.1	268	0.1	278	0.1	72	(Z)	163	0.1
Chess	7,581	3.6	623	0.3	823	0.4	839	0.4	1,130	0.5
Concerts on radio	7,324	3.4	1,371	0.6	762	0.4	847	0.4	807	0.4
Cooking for fun	34,756	16.3	12,328	5.8	5,508	2.6	5,437	2.6	2,996	1.4
Crossword puzzles	33,481	15.7	14,734	6.9	4,002	1.9	3,295	1.5	2,261	1.1
Dance/go dancing	19,646	9.2	1,570	0.7	1,673	0.8	2,755	1.3	2,321	1.1
Dining out	102,610	48.1	20,137	9.4	25,106	11.8	23,083	10.8	10,820	5.1
Electronic games (not TV)	18,318	8.6	5,939	2.8	1,872	0.9	2,759	1.3	1,657	0.8
Entertain friends/relatives at home	81,524	38.2	7,238	3.4	10,162	4.8	17,933	8.4	16,922	7.9
Fly kites	7,079	3.3	109	0.1	44	(Z)	203	0.1	453	0.2
Furniture refinishing	7,642	3.6	267	0.1	172	0.1	197	0.1	420	0.2
Go to bars/night clubs	40,640	19.0	3,930	1.8	4,439	2.1	6,703	3.1	6,151	2.9
Go to beach	47,175	22.1	2,398	1.1	1,643	0.8	4,133	1.9	4,249	2.0
Go to live theater	28,824	13.5	168	0.1	507	0.2	1,296	0.6	3,320	1.6
Go to museums	29,441	13.8	131	0.1	390	0.2	841	0.4	2,795	1.3

Model making	3,370	1.6	274	0.1	140	0.1	299	0.1	364	0.2
Painting, drawing	14,020	6.6	2,406	1.1	1,582	0.7	2,051	1.0	1,718	0.8
Photography	24,645	11.6	3,074	1.4	2,840	1.3	5,169	2.4	4,259	2.0
Picnic	24,544	11.5	279	0.1	555	0.3	1,938	0.9	3,181	1.5
Play bingo	9,177	4.3	957	0.5	1,017	0.5	714	0.3	848	0.4
Play cards	50,318	23.6	6,277	2.9	5,486	2.6	8,027	3.8	7,709	3.6
Play musical instrument	16,680	7.8	6,536	3.1	1,650	0.8	1,495	0.7	1,213	0.6
Reading books	77,472	36.3	42,861	20.1	7,727	3.6	6,896	3.2	4,420	2.1
Surf the Net	57,095	26.8	37,380	17.5	6,354	3.0	3,718	1.7	1,961	0.9
Trivia games	13,387	6.3	1,857	0.9	939	0.4	1,756	0.8	1,736	0.8
Video games	27,580	12.9	10,613	5.0	3,034	1.4	2,839	1.3	2,145	1.0
Woodworking	11,054	5.2	2,268	1.1	1,113	0.5	1,768	0.8	1,192	0.6
Word games	17,349	8.1	6,443	3.0	1,969	0.9	1,990	0.9	1,372	0.6
Zoo attendance	25,124	11.8	126	0.1	74	(Z)	546	0.3	1,264	0.6

Z represents less than 0.05 percent. ¹Includes those participating less than once a month not shown separately. ²Excluding country and rock.

Source: Mediamark Research, Inc., New York, NY, Top-line Reports (copyright). Internet site <<http://www.mediamark.com/mri/docs/TopLineReports.html>>

How Not to Read Everything

Reading everything in an article is time-consuming. It might even be a waste of valuable time if you do not want or need all the information contained in the article. An alternative to reading everything is to skim. *Skimming* means to read some parts and skip others, to find the most important ideas. You would read the parts of the article that are most likely to provide the main ideas and skip those that contain less important facts and details. *Skimming* means reading selectively to get a general idea of what an article is about. You might skim a movie review to decide whether you want to see the movie or skim a newspaper report of a recent political incident to get an overview of what happened.

How to Skim

In skimming, your overall purpose should be to read only those parts of an article or selection that contain the most important information. Skip what is not important. The type of material you are reading will, in part, determine how you should adapt your reading techniques.

To acquaint you with the process of skimming, a basic, step-by-step procedure is presented and applied to a sample article. Then, adaptations of this general technique to specific types of reading materials are discussed.

As a general guide, read the following items:

- **The title.** The title often announces the subject and provides clues about the author's approach or attitude toward the subject.

- **The subtitle or introductory byline.** Some types of material include a statement underneath the title that further explains the title or is written to catch the reader's interest.
- **The introductory paragraph.** The introductory paragraph often provides important background information and introduces the subject. It may also provide a brief overview of how the subject is treated.
- **The headings.** A heading announces the topic that will be discussed in the paragraphs that follow. When read successively, the headings form an outline or list of topics covered.
- **The first sentence of each paragraph.** Most paragraphs are built around a topic sentence, which states the main idea of the paragraph. The most common position for the main idea is in the first sentence of the paragraph. If you read a first sentence that clearly *is not* the topic sentence, you might jump to the end of the paragraph and read the last sentence. (See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of main ideas and topic sentences.)
- **Keywords.** Quickly glance through the remainder of the paragraph. Try to pick out keywords that answer who, what, when, where, or how much about the main idea of the paragraph. Try to notice names, numbers, dates, places, and capitalized or italicized words and phrases. Also notice any numbered sequences. This quick glance will add to your overall impression of the paragraph and will confirm that you have identified the main idea of the paragraph.
- **The title or legend of any maps, graphs, charts, or diagrams.** The title or legend will state concisely what the typographical aid depicts and suggest what important event, idea, or relationship it is intended to emphasize.
- **The last paragraph.** The last paragraph often provides a conclusion or summary for the article. It might state concisely the main points of the article or suggest new directions for considering the topic. If it is lengthy, read only the last few lines.

As a general rule of thumb, you should skip more than you read. Although the amount to skip varies according to the type of material, a safe estimate might be that you should skip about 70 to 80 percent of the material. Because you are skipping large portions of the material, your comprehension will be limited. An acceptable level of comprehension for skimming is often 50 percent, although it may vary according to your purpose.

Exercise 2

Directions: *Skim the following article by Susan Gilbert, from Science Digest, on noise pollution, reading only the highlighted portions. Your purpose is to*

learn about the causes, effects, and control of noise pollution. Answer the questions following the article when you have finished skimming.

NOISE POLLUTION

The Volume Continues to Rise, Yet the Research Money Dwindles

Loud noise is the most pervasive kind of pollution. Scientific studies have shown that it not only harms the ears, it alters moods, reduces learning ability and may increase blood pressure. It doesn't take the earsplitting clatter of a jackhammer for a city dweller to experience, daily, enough noise to cause permanent hearing loss. The screeching of traffic, the din in a crowded restaurant, the roar of airplanes overhead—even music from blaring radios—are enough to exceed the maximum noise the federal government permits in workplaces for an eight-hour day.

The Environmental Protection Agency, once committed to reducing the insidious problem of noise, has been stifled in its attempts to do anything. Its \$14-million program to curb noise pollution was eliminated four years ago. Some government agencies, however, have been successful. The Federal Aviation Administration has forced airplanes to cut noise levels by half within two miles of taking off and landing at major airports. New York City adopted the nation's first anti-noise code in 1972 and imposes \$25 fines for violations, although a majority of cab drivers still lean more on their horns than on their brakes. Chicago, San Francisco and a host of other cities have taken similar measures. In fact, it was such legislation that rallied the forces opposed to the Chicago Cubs playing night baseball at Wrigley Field.

Hazardous Headphones

Many of the most damaging noises, however, are within the power of all of us to control, simply by using a little common sense. Consider the use of stereo headphones—devices that mask uncomfortable noise with entertaining sound. A study by otolaryngologist Phillip Lee, of the University Hospital in Iowa City, disclosed that teenagers who used stereo headphones for three hours suffered temporary hearing loss. These devices proved to be exceptionally damaging when played at 100 decibels or more, the intensity of a chain saw. "People should not turn them up above a normal, conversational level," says Lee.

While stunning and sudden explosions can cause deafness by rupturing an eardrum, hearing can be at least partially restored by surgery. Not so with sustained environmental noises; the damage they cause is often irreversible. As sounds enter the inner ear, they wave hair cells back and forth, causing them to release a chemical transmitter to the nerve fibers that carry auditory messages to the brain. This is how we hear. But too much noise can exhaust—even kill—some hair cells. The effect may be a slight temporary hearing loss or a ringing in the ears.

“A few missing hair cells won’t damage hearing permanently,” says neurobiologist Barbara Bohne, of the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. “But a few lost each weekend will gradually lead to noticeable hearing problems. Once this happens, it’s too late to do anything.” But some precautions can be taken. Earplugs and muffs, which reduce noise by as much as 25 decibels, can make the difference between hazardous and safe exposure. And, adds Bohne, “If you have to cut wood with a chain saw, do it for an hour one Saturday and another hour the following week, rather than for two hours at once.” Separating periods of intense noise with at least a day of relative quiet can allow stunned hair cells time to recover.

Noise certainly makes us angry, but does it increase our blood pressure? Studies have been contradictory. Otolaryngologist Ernest Peterson, of the University of Miami, found that noise makes monkeys’ blood pressure rise. But in a letter published in *The Lancet* last fall, a Swedish doctor reported no such effect on shipyard workers after studying them for eight years.

Noise’s impact on the brain has been measured with more certainty. Children in schools located on loud streets score well below their socioeconomic counterparts in quiet schools, according to the California Department of Health Services.

Two British psychologists, reporting last year in the *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, found that suburban traffic of about 46 decibels (comparable to the hum of a refrigerator) impairs sleep. When the amount of noise entering subjects’ bedrooms was reduced by five decibels (to the level of soft speech), their brains showed an increase in low-frequency, high-amplitude delta waves—a sign of deep sleep.

Audiologist John Mills, of the Medical College of South Carolina, believes that the brain is “the most significant area in need of further study.” He reports that in several animal experiments, 65 decibels of sound sustained for 24 hours (the same level as that produced by an air conditioner) were found somehow to damage the brain stem. This, says Mills, is reason enough to investigate whether the same damage occurs in humans, “When does injury to the brain begin?” he asks. “Is it independent of injury to the ear? These are the things we must learn.”

—Gilbert, “Noise Pollution,” *Science Digest*

1. How does noise pollution affect humans?

2. Give several examples of noise pollution.

3. Has the Environmental Protection Agency been successful in controlling noise pollution?

4. Can damage from environmental noise be corrected?

5. What questions remain unanswered about the effects of noise pollution on humans?

Skimming Various Types of Material

Effective skimming hinges on the reader’s ability to recognize the organization and structure of the material and to locate the main ideas of the selection. The procedure for skimming outlined in the section “How to Skim” is a general guide that must be adapted to the material. Table 2 lists

Type of Material	Focus On
Textbook chapters	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chapter objectives and introductions 2. Headings and typographical aids 3. Graphic and visual aids 4. Review and discussion questions
Reference sources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Date 2. Organization of the source 3. Topical index
Newspaper articles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Title 2. Opening paragraphs 3. First sentences of remaining paragraphs
Magazine articles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Title/subtitle/byline 2. Opening paragraphs 3. Photographs/captions 4. Headings/first sentences 5. Last several paragraphs
Nonfiction books	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Front and back cover or book jacket 2. Author’s credentials 3. Table of contents 4. Preface 5. First and last chapters

suggestions for skimming textbooks, reference sources, newspaper and magazine articles, and nonfiction books.

Reading Popular Press Material

The two most common types of daily reading are newspapers and magazines. These sources contain two important types of information—hard news articles and feature articles. They have essentially the same form, consisting of a beginning, called the *lead*, the story itself, called the *body* or *development*, and sometimes a formal *conclusion* as an ending.

Hard News Articles

Articles that directly report the serious news are known as hard news articles. They are stories about conflict, death, and destruction as well as items of interest and importance in government, politics, science, medicine, business, and the economy. Articles of this type may be organized in one of two ways.

Inverted Structure The traditional structure used in newspaper articles is known as the *inverted pyramid*, because the article moves from general to more specific information. It contains the following parts:

- **Title.** Titles, or headlines, used in hard news stories are brief and directly informative about the article’s content. They are usually expressed in active language, somewhat in the form of a telegraph message: “President Threatens Veto over Budget” or “Diet Drug Thought to Be Health Risk.” Reading the title is usually sufficient to help you decide whether or not to read the article.
- **Datelines, Credit Lines, and Bylines.** These follow the title and come just before the *summary lead*. *Datelines* appear on all but local news stories and generally only give the place where the story came from; occasionally the date will be given. *Credit lines* may also appear before the lead and supplement datelines. They give the name of the wire service or newspaper from which the story was taken, such as “Associated Press” or *Washington Post*. *Bylines* name the writer of the article and are sometimes also included between the title and the lead.
- **Summary Lead.** This opening paragraph contains a summary of the most essential information in the story. It is similar to the *thesis statement* in an essay and the *abstract* in a scholarly article. Reading this lead alone may provide you with all the information you need from the

article and will help you to determine whether you need to read further to get the information you want.

- **Body or Development.** The supporting facts are presented here—arranged in descending order of importance or interest. The most important details are placed first, followed by those second in importance or interest, and so on, until those facts most easily dispensed with are placed at the end of the story. If the lead paragraph doesn't contain the information you need, this type of organization will permit you to locate it easily. Since the *inverted pyramid* structure contains no conclusion there is no need to skip to the end of the article when prereading it. Look at the following news article and note where its parts are located.

Title or Headline _____ **PILOT PROJECT TO GIVE
COUNTY JURORS A RAISE**

Byline _____ Stephanie Rice

Summary
lead

Nobody ever got rich doing a civic duty. But instead of \$10 a day, jurors in Clark County will soon earn \$61.04, or the equivalent of eight hours at the state's minimum wage of \$7.63 an hour. The increase, effective Nov. 1, is an eight-month test to see if more money will prompt greater participation.

Body

Franklin County, in Eastern Washington, and Des Moines Municipal Court, near SeaTac, also are participating, said Carl McCurley, research manager for the Administrative Office of the Courts in Olympia.

The courts were chosen for their size and location, McCurley said. The daily wages for jurors has been \$10 since 1947. Adjusted for inflation, by 1999 it would have been \$55, according to a 2000 study by the Washington State Jury Commission.

The commission had several ideas on how to make jury service less of a chore in order to draw a greater cross-section of the public. Increasing the daily wage or fee, as the state calls it was ranked the highest priority.

Lawmakers approved \$569,453 for the pilot project, which runs through June 30. They will be asked in January for an additional \$325,000 to continue the project through October. While some people might perk up at the thought of earning minimum wage for sitting in judgment of others, jury duty continues to be an invitation-only affair.

In Clark County, names are randomly picked from a database of 331,336 registered voters and licensed drivers. Jury coordinator Kirsten Morrissey said an average of 678 summonses are sent out for each two-week jury service term.

Continued

Body

An average of 245 people or a “jury yield” of 28 percent report to the Clark County Courthouse. Of those, an average of 185 people sit on a jury in either Superior or District Court. McCurley said the jury yield ranges across the state, but hits as high as 50 percent and sinks as low as 11 percent.

In Clark County, the most reliable jurors are retirees, public education employees, housewives and workers from Southwest Washington Medical Center, the county’s largest employer.

Increasing the wage could make jury duty viable for people who have claimed financial hardship, said presiding Superior Court Judge Robert Harris. For example, single parents who work at minimum-wage jobs may not get their regular paycheck if they have to serve on a jury, but they would earn enough to cover child care expenses. “Obviously, \$10 doesn’t cover much of anything,” Harris said.

Action Story A second common format for hard news articles is the *action story*. It contains all the parts of the inverted pyramid with a few variations. It also begins with a telegraphic title that can be followed by a byline, credit line, and dateline. Its opening paragraph is also in the form of a summary lead. However, its body presents the events in chronological order of their occurrence, rather than in order of importance or interest. Furthermore, this format includes a conclusion that contains additional information that does not fit within the chronology used in the body.

Exercise 3

Directions: *Locate a hard news article from a newspaper or magazine. Determine which format is used, the inverted pyramid or the action story. Then label the article’s parts.*

Feature Articles

A second type of popular press article is the feature article. Found in both newspapers and magazines, the feature article is longer and goes into greater depth than the usual hard news article. It usually deals with larger issues and subjects. Because of its length, this type of article requires a different structure than hard news articles.

It also begins with a *title* that is often in the form of a complete sentence and may contain a byline, credit line, and dateline. Its other parts may differ, though.

- **Feature Lead.** The lead in a feature article does not usually summarize its contents. Instead, it is intended to spark your interest in the topic being presented. It may begin with an interesting anecdote, present some

highlight of the article, or offer an example of something you will learn more about later. Since the feature lead is primarily an interest builder, you may be able to skim through it quickly when reading the article.

- **Nut Graph.** The nut graph explains the nature and scope of the article. Depending upon the length of the article, it may be one paragraph or it may run to several paragraphs. When reading feature articles, read this section carefully. It will offer clues to the organization and content of the article and help you to grasp its main points.
- **Body or Development.** This is where the detailed information of the article is presented. Unlike hard new stories, the information can be organized in more than one way. Each paragraph or section may use a different thought pattern to develop its ideas, much like the expository essay. Mark and annotate this section as you read it, sifting through the main and secondary points.
- **Conclusion.** Feature articles often end with a conclusion, which, like the conclusion of a formal essay, makes a final statement about the subject of the article. Rather than summarizing the information presented, it may refer back to the nut graph, introduce a new way of looking at it, or suggest a direction for further thought.

Refer to the following feature article to see an example of this structure.

Title ————— WHY DO DOGS BARK?

Byline ————— By Richard Folkers

Body or
Development

Feature
lead

Dogs can be pretty good communicators. A yelp is easy to recognize as a sound of distress. Growls are obvious. A whine, coupled with a scratch at the door, may just keep the carpet clean and dry.

attract mates, to maintain pair relationships, and to warn of impending predatory doom. But barking seems to defy all the rules of biological necessity.

Nut Graph

But what about barking? Is a dog sounding an alarm? Defining its territory? Just playing? The principles of evolution dictate that animals retain traits through natural selection. They hang on to functions that contribute to their survival, and that applies to making sounds no less than anything else. Scientists believe male birds sing, for example, to mark their territory, to

Biologists Raymond Coppinger and Mark Feinstein, who have studied this puzzle, say dogs often seem to bark extravagantly and for no apparent reason at all. The two Hampshire College scientists once spent the night in a Minnesota field listening to a guard dog bark continuously for seven hours. There were no other dogs around, no humans responding, no predators lurking. It just barked. Feinstein recently came upon two

Continued

Body or
Development

dogs in a hot car. “One was barking like crazy, the other staring out the window. They were under the same conditions,” he says. “They’ve got this capacity which doesn’t play any necessary function in their lives.”

Those dogs, like all domestic dogs, are descended from the wolf, and wolves don’t bark much. But their puppies do, and Coppinger and Feinstein believe that may help explain the mystery of barking. Early dogs (wolves really) were scavengers, hanging around human habitations—and their plentiful heaps of garbage. Humans, in turn, tended to tolerate the tamer ones; it was they that became the sires of what would become the domestic dog. Experiments in a number of animals have shown that breeding for tameness breeds animals that are, in effect, perpetual ado-

lescents, displaying many youthful traits into adulthood. “You get an animal more like a juvenile wolf,” says Feinstein.

So why do juveniles bark? Feinstein and Coppinger believe wolf pups are in a transition period; a bark is acoustically halfway between an infantile attention-seeking whine and an adult, hostile growl.

Adult dogs do find ways to use their barks to communicate; they might be asking to go in or out, defending territory, or just playing. But as Feinstein notes, precisely because barking has no biological necessity for dogs, “they can adapt it to use under almost any circumstance.”

Ultimately, science’s best answer may be the punch line of the old joke about why dogs chase their tails and lick themselves: because they can.

Conclusion

Exercise
4

Directions: *Select a feature article from the periodicals available to you. Label its parts, then mark and annotate it.*

Exercise
5

Directions: *Locate two feature articles or two news articles. Compare their organization, noting similarities and differences.*