

Lesson 3: Skimming

Skimming involves reading quickly for the general understanding of a text, in other words, skimming is establishing the main idea of a text. In understanding the concept of a main idea, it is useful to distinguish between the following terms: topic, main idea, topic sentence and supporting details.

The **topic** of a text is the subject, or what the text is about. A topic can be expressed as a noun or a noun phrase. Some examples of topics include renewable energy, fossil fuels, solar energy, etc.

The **main idea** is expressed as a sentence. If someone asks you to identify the main idea of a passage and you respond with a single word, you have not said enough; you have probably just identified the topic. Some examples of main ideas include:

The study investigated the potential impacts of future climate and land-use change on vertebrate biodiversity across the planet.

The impacts of an expansion in bioenergy cropland are already becoming apparent.

We should be thinking about how to reduce energy consumption if biodiversity is to be protected.

A **topic sentence** is the term used to identify the sentence in a paragraph that contains the main idea. Conventionally, the topic sentence is the first sentence in a paragraph, but not always. It can be at the beginning, the middle, or the end. Topic sentences are useful in determining the relationship between main ideas and supporting details.

How to Find the Main Idea

- ✓ Identify the Topic
- ✓ Summarize the Passage

After reading the passage thoroughly, summarize it in your own words in one sentence.

- ✓ Look at the First and Last Sentences of the Passage

Be careful: sometimes the author will use words like but, however, in contrast, nevertheless, etc, if you see one of these words that negates or qualifies the first sentence, that is a clue that the second sentence is the main idea.

- ✓ Look for Repetition of Ideas

If you read through a paragraph and you have no idea how to summarize it because there is so much information, start looking for repeated words, phrases, or related ideas.

Activities

1-Synonym Match. Skimming is easier when you recognize that different words often mean the same thing.

1. Investigate	A. Harmful
2. Apparent	B. Growing / Getting bigger
3. Urgent	C. Use
4. Mitigate	D. Clear or easy to see
5. Reliance	E. Dependence
6. Consumption	F. To reduce or lessen
7. Expansion	G. To study or look into
8. Detrimental	H. Very important / fast

2- True or False

- a. The study was a collaboration between researchers from Germany and the UK. **(T / F)**
- b. Using bioenergy is always better for the environment than doing nothing about climate change.
(T / F)
- c. Expanding bioenergy crops like corn and oil palm helps protect the habitats of 36% of animals. **(T / F)**
- d. In tropical areas, oil-palm farms are already causing damage to local plants and animals. **(T / F)**
- e. To save biodiversity, the researchers suggest we should mainly focus on eating more bioenergy crops. **(T / F)**
- f. The research suggests that simply reducing how much energy we use is a key way to protect nature.
(T / F)

3-Matching Meaning. Match the Formal Main Ideas (1–5) with their Simple Versions (a-e).

<p>1. The impacts of an expansion in bioenergy cropland can already be seen on biodiversity.</p>	<p>a-To save plants and animals, we should focus on using much less energy.</p>
<p>2. Although bioenergy is vital to mitigate climate change, its impacts on biodiversity should not be ignored.</p>	<p>b- This research looked at how the future climate and land use might affect nature.</p>
<p>3. Climate change and the expansion of bioenergy crops would threaten vertebrate species.</p>	<p>c- We can already see how growing crops for energy is hurting nature.</p>
<p>4. It will be wise to drastically reduce energy consumption to protect biodiversity.</p>	<p>d- Even though plant energy is important for the climate, we must remember it can also hurt animals and plants.</p>
<p>5. The study dealt with the potential impacts of future climate and land-use change on biodiversity</p>	<p>e- Global warming and growing more plants for energy will put many animals in danger.</p>

1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5.....

4- Now, choose from the list A-F the main idea for paragraphs 1-5. There is one extra letter that you do not need to use.

Bioenergy crops could be as bad for biodiversity as climate change

The study investigated the potential impacts of future climate and land-use change on vertebrate biodiversity across the planet. The authors argue there is an urgent need to carefully consider biodiversity when expanding bioenergy cropland, for example growing oil palm, maize and rapeseed.

The research was led by the Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre and the Technical University of Munich, Germany, in collaboration with Durham University. Speaking about the research findings, Professor Stephen Willis said: "We found that the combination of climate change and large-scale expansion of bioenergy crops would together threaten about 36% of the habitats of all global vertebrate species, including many that are already the subject of significant conservation work.

While bioenergy is clearly an important tool for climate change mitigation, the potential impacts on biodiversity must not be ignored. A strong reliance on bioenergy to combat climate change could result in outcomes for biodiversity that are little better than would occur if we didn't implement bioenergy strategies, despite the consequent climate change implications.

The impacts of an expansion in bioenergy cropland are already becoming apparent. In tropical regions, oil-palm plantations are having a detrimental impact on flora and fauna. In temperate areas, the replacement of other crops with maize has negatively affected populations of farmland birds and mammals.

In order to meet the Paris Agreement aims to keep the rise in global temperatures below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, many climate mitigation scenarios rely on increased bioenergy use, requiring large-scale production of crops such as corn, rape and oil palm. This would severely affect the biodiversity currently found in these regions. The reduction of the negative effects of climate change achieved by the use of bioenergy is not enough to counteract this loss of biodiversity. Instead, we should be thinking about how to reduce energy consumption if biodiversity is to be protected."

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- A. Climate change and the expansion of bioenergy crops would threaten vertebrate species.
- B. It will be wise to drastically reduce energy consumption to protect biodiversity.
- C. Producing bioenergy to limit climate change requires a radical change in land use.
- D. The study dealt with the potential impacts of future climate and land-use change on biodiversity.
- E. The impacts of an expansion in bioenergy cropland can already be seen on biodiversity.
- F. Although bioenergy is vital to mitigate climate change, its impacts on biodiversity should not be ignored.

Paragraph 1: ____ | Paragraph 2: ____ | Paragraph 3: ____ | Paragraph 4: ____ | Paragraph 5: ____

Extra option: _____