



2A



Skills Practice: Skimming

In a reading exam, there's always a balance between speed and understanding, so the second essential time-saving skill you'll need is called 'Skimming'. This basically means looking at the text quickly to get the general idea, but maybe not the details.

This is a simple technique that you can use to save time in the exam; simply read the FIRST and LAST SENTENCE of each paragraph and try to catch a few KEY WORDS in the middle. For example, the follow paragraph contains 160 words. However if we skim the text, you can see that we only need to read about 33% of them to get the main idea.

Not only is olive oil a central part of the Italian diet, it is also one of the country's major agricultural products. Along with Spain, Greece, Turkey and Morocco, Italy is one of the five main producers in the world, with a national average of more than 464 000 tons per year, or 7.6% of the world's production. Domestically, demand for olive oil is so high that Italy also imports about 65% of Spanish olive oil exports every year. In Italy, olive tree cover approximately one million hectares. Olive trees rarely thrive in cold temperatures, olive tree plantations require a relatively mild climate and the cultivation of olive trees in Italy mostly occurs in central regions (19%) and southern regions (78%). In terms of altitude, around 2% by area of olives grow in mountainous areas, 53% on lower lying hills and 44% on plains. The composition of olive oil varies with the cultivar, altitude, time of harvest and extraction process.



suggested time
2 minutes

TASK

The text on the following page is all about pasta, but each paragraph has a different theme and talks about one specific aspect of pasta.

SKIM read the article (only reading the first and last lines of each paragraph, plus key words).

Identify what the theme of each paragraph is and choose an appropriate heading for it from the list **1 – 6** below.

Paragraph A has been done as an example.

- 1) How Pasta is Served _____
- 2) Nutritional Values _____
- 3) A Long History _____
- 4) How Pasta is Made _____
- 5) What is pasta? _____ **A**
- 6) All shapes and Sizes _____

Pasta

A

Pasta is the Italian designation or name given to a type of starchy noodle or dumpling food or dish typically made from grain flour, commonly wheat, mixed into a paste or dough, usually with water or eggs, and formed or cut into sheets or other shapes. It is usually cooked by boiling, baking or frying. Rice flour, or legumes such as beans or lentils, are sometimes used in place of wheat flour to yield a different flavour and texture, or as a gluten-free alternative. Pasta is a staple food ingredient of Italian cuisine.

B

Food historians estimate that the dish probably took hold in Italy as a result of extensive Mediterranean trading in the Middle Ages. From the 13th century, references to pasta dishes—macaroni, ravioli, gnocchi, vermicelli—crop up with increasing frequency across the Italian peninsula. In the 14th and 15th centuries, dried pasta became popular for its easy storage. This allowed people to store pasta on ships when exploring the New World. A century later, pasta was present around the globe during the voyages of discovery

C

Pastas are divided into two broad categories: dried (*pasta secca*) and fresh (*pasta fresca*). Most dried pasta is produced commercially via an extrusion process, although it can be produced at home. Fresh pasta is traditionally produced by hand, sometimes with the aid of simple machines. Fresh pastas available in grocery stores are produced commercially by large-scale machines.

D

Both dried and fresh pastas come in a number of shapes, with 310 specific forms known by over 1300 documented names. In Italy, the names of specific pasta shapes or types often vary by locale. For example, the pasta form *cavatelli* is known by 28 different names depending upon the town and region. Common forms of pasta include long and short shapes, tubes, flat shapes or sheets, miniature shapes for soup, those meant to be filled or stuffed, and specialty or decorative shapes.

E

As a category in Italian cuisine, both fresh and dried pastas are classically used in one of three kinds of prepared dishes: as *pasta asciutta* (or *pastasciutta*), cooked pasta is plated and served with a complementary side sauce or condiment; a second classification of pasta dishes is *pasta in brodo*, in which the pasta is part of a soup-type dish. A third category is *pasta al forno*, in which the pasta is incorporated into a dish that is subsequently baked in the oven. Pasta dishes are generally simple, but individual dishes vary in preparation. Some pasta dishes are served as a small first course or for light lunches, such as pasta salads. Other dishes may be portioned larger and used for dinner. Pasta sauces similarly may vary in taste, color and texture.

F

In terms of nutrition, cooked plain pasta is 31% carbohydrates (mostly starch), 6% protein, and low in fat, with moderate amounts of manganese, but pasta generally has low micronutrient content. Pasta may be enriched or fortified, or made from whole grains.