

# The Speed Reading Monster Course



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# **Introduction**

## **Pre-Requisites of Speed Reading**

Alvin Tofler, author of *Third Wave*, contends that we are now in the information age. It is said that power belongs to those who have the knowledge and information. This we would like to dispute.

Being in the information age, so many data and inputs are available. Tons and tons of materials are readily available with just one click of the mouse. Numerous data are readily available to all people. Yet, how come not all of these people who have access to mountains of materials are considered powerful?

It is our contention that those who are able to wade through tons of information, comprehend, and make use of that knowledge for meaningful purposes IN A SHORTER PERIOD OF TIME are the ones who hold the key to power. Speed is the key.

This reality reinforced the need to update our skills in speed reading. The need to accelerate our reading and learning abilities to the extreme resulted to this book. This book offers techniques that you can make use to hasten the skill in reading and comprehension. It presents scientific explanation on the causes of slow reading. It explains how the practice of hearing your “inner voice” actually saying the words you are reading can drastically slow you down.

Speed reading basically covers two areas: reading and comprehension. These go hand in hand. It is useless to study speed reading if you have trouble in absorbing information. You should already be an able reader before you try to speed read. Speed reading will not help you if you have problems in understanding the meaning of the words. To be able to enjoy the full benefits of speed reading, you must have the necessary facilities in understanding college-level materials.

Before starting on speed reading exercises, you must have the condition of your eyes checked. You might want to adjust your reading glasses. Speed reading will “exercise” your eyes, and would not unduly strain them and hamper your improvement. Consult the eye doctor for possible advice on how to take care of your eyes. They will provide advice on the best position while reading, proper position of the lamp or light source, what to do when you experience eye strain, etc.

Apart from these, the speed of learning speed reading (excuse the pun!) is heavily dependent on four other factors. Ask yourself these important questions:

- Why do you want to improve your reading? The purpose determines the motivating factors that will inspire you to go through and complete the whole program.
- How much do you want to improve? Do you want to increase it from 300 words per minute to 800 wpm then to 1,000 wpm? You have to set a target to be able to determine the extent of your growth.
- How much time do you have for the exercises? Practice make perfect. It is not enough for you to know the skills, but you should devote time to practice and upgrade your skills faster.
- How open are you to new techniques? This report requires you to have an open mind to be able to see and recognize the usefulness of new and scientific techniques in speed reading. This report incorporates new practices such as reading a report from the computer.

It is said that speed readers are considered impatient readers. So, what are you waiting for? Let the lessons begin ...

# Chapter 1

## Before Speed Reading

How many times have you promised yourself to **read** more but just never found enough time?

If only you could do it quickly and more efficiently.

Effective and efficient **readers** learn to use many styles of **reading** for different purposes, which include skimming, scanning, and critical reading. Before reading, you need to identify the purpose why you'll be doing such activity: Are you looking for background information on a topic you know a little bit about already? Are you looking for specific details and facts that you can marshal in support of an argument? Are you trying to see how an author approaches his topic rhetorically?

It is crucial to know your purpose in reading as it helps focus your attention on important aspects of the text. Before turning those pages, take a moment first to reflect and clarify what your goal really is.

There are many ways to familiarize your self with the background of the text, and gain a useful overview of its content and structure before actually absorbing and digesting the text. Seek information about the context of the reading, its purpose, and its general content. Look for an abstract or an author's or editor's note that may precede the article itself. Read any background information that is available to you about the author, the occasion of the writing, its intended audience, and more useful information.

After viewing the title and noting general ideas that are accessible to you as a reader, you can continue to browse pages and scan paragraphs in order to get the gist of what material the text covers and how that material is arranged. As soon as you finished looking over the text as a whole, read the introductory paragraph or section, noticing that some authors will provide an overview of their message as well as an explicit statement of their thesis or main point in the opening portion of the text.

Considering the background information, the messages conveyed by the title, note or abstract, and the information from the opening paragraph or section, you should be able to proceed with a good hunch of the reading material's direction.

In order to become aware of your reading situation, ask yourself questions like:

- What do I want (or need) to know and learn?
- In which context do I want (or need) this?
- Which texts could suit these needs?
- What made me choose this text?
- How deeply an understanding of the text do I need?
- How much time have I got?
- How do I want to proceed?

## **Consider Your Purpose**

To help you determine a purpose, consider the following ideas:

- Are you looking for brief information, main ideas, complete comprehension, or detailed analysis?
- How will this text help you?
- Is this the best material to meet your goals?

- What does background or summary information provided by the author or editor predict the text will do?
- Does there seem to be a clear introduction and conclusion that can be useful? Where?
- What claims does the author make at the beginnings and endings of sections?
- Are there key words that are repeated or put in bold or italics to help you skim and scan?
- What kinds of development and detail do you notice? Does the text include statistics, tables, and pictures or is it primarily prose? Are names of authors or characters repeated frequently?

### **Look for Specific Words**

- Scan a section for key words.
- Skim to the words that provide meaning and may be useful for you and your purpose.

### **Become an Impatient Reader**

Speed readers are considered impatient readers. They read with a purpose and want to find answers immediately. They can't wait to find out what the whole text is all about that they usually make predictions and guess the answers.

Some readers say, "If I think ahead while I am reading, my predictions may be wrong."

The truth is, predicting is useful because all your concentration is focused on the reading and you are actually making senses of it. Speed readers predict what the text is likely to tell them next, but they are not upset if a prediction is wrong; they quickly adjust their expectations.

## **Different Speeds for Different Materials**

You do not need to read every word to understand a text; however some texts will require careful reading, so you need to know when to adjust your reading speed. Skim a text, and then decide if a slower reading approach is necessary.

### ***Practice Activity***

In order to avoid reading every word, you must increase the rate your eyes move across the page. As a practice activity, choose an easy material for to read. Sweep your eyes faster across the page than you've ever done before. Do not mouth the words; do not even mentally say them. Start with short practice periods, e.g. 3 minutes, record your rate (how many words have you read in 3 minutes?), and then continue with longer periods or with texts that are more complicated.

### ***The First Steps in Speed Reading***

In reading, your starting position and reading gesture is relevant: sit up straight, with the book being held by your left hand, and with your right hand doing the pacing.

Being already a good reader is a plus factor in attempting to speed read. Otherwise, it may be quite difficult and may take some time. Speed reading program will not work if you have problems comprehending and your vocabulary is too little. In fact, rushing through things you can't understand is actually useless. Yes, you may be able to read fast, but you just won't understand what you will be reading.

## **Speed Reading Tips**

Read until the end! Do not get tired, discouraged, or bored; don't just stop reading when you

want to. Don't you know that ideas do become clearer the further you go with the reading materials? After you finish reading, recall the things that you have learned, return to the ideas that seem unclear, and reread them in order to grasp their ideas. When you begin to read, you should:

- Be able to find the answers to the questions you've come up with
- Answer guide questions at each chapter (you may see these questions at the beginning or at the end of the chapter)
- Take note of the important words and phrases – underlined, italicized, and bold printed
- Read only one section at a time, and recite the summary of each section afterwards
- Do not ignore captions under pictures, tables, graphs, etc.
- Carefully read and absorb difficult passages. On parts which are not clear, don't be afraid to stop and reread

## **Knowing How Deeply to Study the Material**

Where you only need the **shallowest knowledge of the subject**, you can **skim** the material. This is done by reading only chapter headings, introductions and summaries.

If you need a **moderate level of information** on a subject, then you can **scan** the text. Here you read the chapter introductions and summaries in detail, but may speed-read the contents of the chapters – picking out and understanding key words and important concepts. At this level of looking at the document, it is worth paying attention to diagrams and graphs.

Only when you **need detailed knowledge of a subject** is it worth **studying** the text. Studying is skimming the material first to get an overview, and afterwards reading it in detail while seeing how the information presented connects to the overall structure of the subject. An effective method of getting the deepest level of understanding on a text is to use a formal method such as **SQ3R** (discussed in a later chapter).

Do you read every article of every magazine, or every chapter of every book? If so, you're probably spending a lot of time reading stuff you don't need. **Remember:** You don't need to read all of what you DO read. Be choosy. Select the chapters and articles that are important. Ignore the rest.

## Chapter 2

# How People Read

Our conscious brain takes in 16 bits of information per second, compared to our non-conscious brain that absorbs 11 million bits per second. Can you imagine the difference? That is the reason why we hate to do stuffs consciously – because it does take effort and discipline. Our non-conscious brain structures process tons of information coming from our sense organs such as breathing, heartbeat, and blood circulation, not to mention instincts and emotions – all without our awareness.

The eyes, our primary tool in reading, only take in information when they are stopped. If you want, you can verify this by holding a book up in front of people and let them read a certain part in it. Watch their eyes as they read though don't tell them what you are observing. What feels like continuous motion is actually move → stop → read, move → stop → read, and so on. **Speed readers** minimize the number of stops by maximizing the number of words taken in at each stop.

### Short Exercise

Here's an exercise that will help you develop effective eye movements. Try looking at the following sentences in three ways:

First, focus your attention: look only at the first "S" in success.

Second, adjust your focus / attention: look to be able to see at the entire word, "success".

Third, adjust your focus so you are seeing three or more words at the same time.

Because you can't say three words at the same time, you can't subvocalize if you are reading three words at a time. Thus, elimination of **vocalization** from thought is necessary. Although many

think that verbalization is essential to linking words with concepts, common experience shows that this is not so. For example, if someone asks a mechanic how a car works, he surely knows what to answer but will have a problem in how to respond. The subject of his thought is too complex and multi-dimensional to be expressed in linear forms. He may be able to visualize and manipulate concepts -- and find answers -- to mechanical problems in his mind without ever putting those thoughts into words.

The same is possible with abstract ideas (which are also often highly complex and multi-dimensional), though it takes practice because there are no definite "images" to fall back on. In some cases, especially when the thought involved is quite complex, removing the verbal component not only speeds up the thinking process, but can even lead to intuitive leaps that verbal thinking might have prevented.

Consider the way in which you are **reading** this text. Most people think that they read the way **young children do** – either letter-by-letter, or at best word-by-word.

The truth is, we do not read letter-by-letter or word-by-word. Instead, we are fixing our eyes on block of words. Notice the way your eye muscles actually move when reading a *printed* text. Try to move your eyes to the next block of words, and go on. Effectively you are not reading words, but blocks of words at a time. The period of time during which the eye rests on one word is called a **fixation**.

You may also notice that you don't always proceed from one block of words to the next. Sometimes, you may move back to a preceding block of words if you are unsure about something or if you don't understand what it meant. These disruptions to the forward flow of reading are called **skip-backs**.

Only **speed readers** have been trained to create mini eye movements, while the rest of us read

with micro eye-movements. The former produces speed reading because they engage the peripheral-vision to chunk words simultaneously, not just one-word at a time; while the latter is automatic, and keep adjusting our eyes to place the words we read on our *foveal centralis*, the sharpest focusing area of our retina.

## **Pay Attention**

Most people read in the same way that they watch television – in an inattentive, passive way. What they should know is that reading takes a lot of effort and you must exert the effort. A wise teacher once told me that you can learn anything if you do three things. That is,

PAY ATTENTION, PAY ATTENTION, and PAY ATTENTION.

## **Reducing Fixation Time for Speed Reading**

The minimum length of time needed for a fixation should only be a quarter of a second. By pushing yourself to minimize the time you take until you reach such rate, you will get better at picking up information from very brief and few fixations. This is a matter of practice and confidence.

## **Relationship between Rate of Reading and Comprehension**

Research shows that there is a big relationship between rate and comprehension. Some people read rapidly and comprehend well; others read slowly and comprehend badly. Thus, there is some reason to believe that the factors producing slow reading are also involved in lowered comprehension.

Good comprehension depends on whether you can extract and retain the important ideas that you've read, not on how fast you read them. If you can do this fast, then your reading speed can be

increased. If you pair fast-reading with worrying about comprehension, your reading speed will drop because the mind is occupied with your fears; hence, you will not be paying attention to the ideas that you are reading.

However, if you concentrate on the purpose of reading (locating main ideas and finding answers to your questions), your speed and comprehension should increase. Your concern should be not with how fast you can get through a chapter alone, but with how quickly you can comprehend the facts and ideas that you need.

Comprehension during speed reading is easier than during standard reading. This is because the mind is busy looking for meaning, not rereading words and sentences. The average reader spends about 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the time rereading words than actually reading them. Rereading interrupts the flow of comprehension and slows down the process, that's why the habit of rereading should be eliminated.

How to comprehend easily? Scan the chapter first. Identify the sections to which the author devotes the most amount of space. If there are lots of diagrams for a particular topic, then that must also be an important concept. If you're really under time pressure, you can skip the sections to which the least amount of space is devoted.

Take note on headings and read the first sentence of every paragraph more carefully than the rest of the paragraph. The main idea is usually situated there. Read the important parts and the main ideas. Focus on nouns and main propositions in each sentence. Look for the noun-verb combinations, and focus the mind on these. Then, close the book and ask yourself what you now know about the subject that you didn't know before you started.

## **Reducing Skip Backs**

**Important:** Don't reread the same phrases from the text!

Poor readers read and reread the same phrase over and over again. This habit of making "regressions" doubles, or worse triples, reading time and often does not even result in better comprehension. A single careful, attentive speed reading may not be always enough for completely comprehending the matter you are reading, but is often more effective than constant regressions in the middle rate of a reading. It is best to work on paying closer attention and doing a preview first before the careful reading.

To help reduce the number of times that the eyes go back to a previous word or sentence, run a pointer along the line as you read. This could be a finger, a pen, or any pointed material. Your eyes will follow the tip of your pointer, smoothing the flow of speed reading. The speed at which you read using this method will largely depend on the speed at which you move the pointer; so if you want to speed up your reading, you also have to increase your pointing rate.

## **Five Types of Reading**

An efficient reader adjusts his speed and strategy to suit the need of the moment. The 5 types of reading are classified into:

### ***1. Skimming***

Skimming refers to reading quickly to gain a general impression as to whether the text is of use to you. You are not necessarily searching for a specific item because it only provides an "overview" of the text.

Skimming is somewhat like reading the morning newspaper. You don't actually start at the top

left corner and read every article on every page. You read the headlines, reject many of the articles that you don't find relevant, and read only those that interests you, sometimes in a hit and miss fashion – reading the headline, the first paragraph, skipping down to check out the names of the people.

### **Why Should I Skim?**

Contents of most reading materials are not all important and relevant. Some of them are simple supporting details in which absence of them still makes the text complete. In other words, they are only trash. You wouldn't waste your time reading the trash at all, would you? The important items may be skimmed and earmarked for later reading. The critical ones may be skimmed to confirm that they are really critical. What is left in the “really critical” stack will demand intensity. Even then, you may want to skim each one before you read in detail.

Skimming on a regular basis develops your ability to learn this strategy. It also improves other reading rates such as for studying and for average reading. It builds your knowledge and vocabulary base so you have the background to rapidly absorb these ideas as they appear in other context.

### **How to Skim**

1. Read the title. This focuses your attention on the topic.
2. Read the introduction. This may be the first paragraph or two. It usually describes, in general, what the entire selection will be about.
3. Read the first sentence in each paragraph. Often, as many as 80% of the paragraphs start with a summary or topic sentence. The rest of the sentences in the paragraph simply elaborate. You may skip the elaboration unless it is obviously necessary, such as the definition of a very important term. When you skim, you really are only looking for general ideas.

4. Read the conclusion. This may be the last paragraph or two. It usually summarizes the article, specifies an opinion, or makes some recommendations based on the general content.
5. Test your comprehension. Look away from the article and tell yourself in a sentence or two what the entire article was about.

## **2. Scanning**

When you're looking, say for instance a car service phone number in the telephone directory, you don't read every listing, do you? Instead, you skip over a lot of unrelated information and scan for a visual image of the name of the company on the relevant page. It is like looking for a friend at the basketball game. You do not look at each individual face across every row of seats. Because you have a visual image of your friend's face, you scan the audience until you see him. Scanning printed words is similar to this.

### **Why Should I Scan?**

You scan to locate a single fact or a specific bit of information without reading everything in the whole text material, or even in just a chapter. Perhaps you have a list of terms that you know are going to be on the next biology test. You have already encountered them during the lecture in class so while reviewing, you just look up each word in the index, go to the given page number, and scan for just that word. When you find them, you read the sentence in which they appear. If it is not yet clear to you, then you may want to read the entire paragraph.

### **How to Scan**

1. Flip through the pages to see how the information is organized. It may be alphabetical, chronological, topical categories from most important to least important, or the standard essay

format of introduction, body, and conclusion.

2. Turn to the section most likely to contain the specified details.
3. Keep a visual image of the key word in mind.
4. Run your eyes over the material in a search for that keyword visual image. Don't be tempted to stop and browse. You can do that some other time.

### ***3. Light Reading***

Reading for leisure tends to be 'light'. Thus, the main purpose of the reader in performing this type of reading is when he has ample time in such activity. Light reading is done according to the following:

- Read at a pace that feels comfortable.
- Read while understanding.
- Skim the boring, irrelevant passages.

An average light reading speed is 100-200 words per minute. This form of reading does not generally require detailed concentration.

### ***4. Word by Word Reading***

This type of reading is time consuming and demands a high level of concentration. It is done by reading a word after every word. Some materials are not readily understood, so they require slow and careful analytical reading. People use this type of reading for unfamiliar words and concepts, scientific formulas, technical materials, and the like. It can take up to an hour just to read a few paragraphs or

chapter of the text.

### ***5. Reading to Study***

The main method used in reading to study is called **SQ3R**. Its aim is to understand the material in some depth. The method involves five simple steps, namely **S**urvey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecall and **R**eview, in which the name came from.

- **S**urvey: skim thoroughly to gain an overview and note key points.
- **Q**uestion: devise questions you hope the text will answer.
- **R**ead: slowly and carefully.
- **R**ecall: from memory, write down the main points made by the chapter.
- **R**eview: revisit and answer the questions you first raised. Compare these to your recall and establish how well the text has answered them. Fill in any gaps by further reading

## **Chapter 3**

# Radically Increasing Your Reading Speed

Speed reading helps you to read and understand texts more quickly. It is an essential skill in any environment where you have to learn bulky pieces of information fast.

The most important thing you need to know about speed reading is to identify what information you need from a document before you start reading. For example, if you only want an outline of the different computer programming languages, then you can skim the document very quickly and extract only the essential facts. On the other hand, if you need to understand the real detail of the document – how program X differs from program Y and Z – then you need to read it slowly enough to fully understand it.

You will get the greatest time saving from speed reading by learning to adjust your reading type depending on your purpose and need.

## Technical Issues

Even when you know how to ignore irrelevant details, you can make other technical improvements to your reading style that can increase your reading speed.

As what we have mentioned earlier, most people tend to read the way young children do – either letter-by-letter or word-by-word. But the truth is, reading is about fixing the eyes on one block of words, then moving them again to the next block, and so on. Thus, you are reading blocks of words at a time, and not individual words one-by-one.

Skilled readers are able to read the most number of words in each block. They will dwell on each block for an instant, and will immediately move on. This technique reduces the amount of work

that the reader's eyes have to do. It also increases the volume of information that can be read in a certain period.

Poor readers, on the other hand, spend a lot of time reading small blocks of words. They will skip back often, resulting to decrease in reading speed. This irregular eye movement will make reading tiring. That is why poor readers tend to dislike reading, and may find it harder to concentrate and understand any reading material.

Speed reading aims to improve reading skills by:

- *Increasing the number of words in each block:*

Consciousness is necessary in trying to expand the number of words that you read at a time. Practice will help you read faster. You may also find that you can increase the number of words read by holding the text a little further from your eyes. The more words you can read in each block, the faster you will read!

- *Reducing fixation time:*

The minimum length of time needed to read each block is probably  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a second. By pushing yourself to reduce the time you take, you will get better at picking up information quickly.

- *Reducing skip backs:*

To reduce the number of times your eyes goes back to a previous text, run a pointer along the line as you read. Your eyes should follow the tip of your pointer to smoothen the flow of your reading.

## **Self-Pacing Techniques in Speed Reading**

Speed reading is not a big incomprehensible subject. Professional speed reading classes mainly teach a handful of quick methods that help people focus their attention better. The eyes are drawn to movement. Speed reading methods put that motion on the material being read.

Your starting position is essential. You should sit up straight, grip the book down with your left hand, and use your right hand to do the pacing.

You should already be an able reader before you try to speed read. Speed reading will not help you if you have problems in understanding the meaning of the words. In fact, it may be fruitless for you to try to rush through things that you can't comprehend. You should have the basics down already first.

Before you start speed reading, you should do a survey of the data first and foremost to get a general idea of what you will be undertaking and of the type of writing. The self-pacing methods below used in speed reading can help in increasing focus and understanding. They can also help in breaking the habit of reading and reading again.

### ***The Hand Technique***

The first technique is to simply place your right hand on the page and slowly move it straight down the page, drawing your eyes down as you read. Keep an equal, gradual motion, as if your right hand has its own free will. Your eyes may not be exactly where your hand is, but this simple movement will allow you to go faster. Don't start, read a little, stop, read a little, start, read a little. Keep the movement slow and easy. Only do it once per page. If you are "left-handed," use your left hand as the dominant pacing hand.

### ***The Finger Technique***

Lift your fingers and make two even bounces on each line. Each time you bounce, you are ought to be making a fixation of about sets of 3-4 words. This should be done with a balance arm muscle and not just wiggling the wrist.

### ***The Card Technique***

The next method is to utilize a card or a folded-up piece of paper *on top of* the line of print to block the words after you read them. Move it down the page slowly and evenly, and try to read the lines before you cover the words up. This helps break the habit of reading a line of text over and over again. It helps you pay more attention the first time. Be sure to push the card down quicker than you think you can go. Slide the card down once per page.

### ***The Sweep Technique***

Another tactic is to use your hand to help draw your eyes across the page. Slightly cup your right hand. Keep your fingers together. With a very loose and fluid motion, sweep your fingers from left to right, underlining the line with the tip of your tallest finger from about an inch in and an inch out on each line. Use your whole arm to move, balancing on your arm muscle. Imagine that you are dusting off dirt from the page.

## **Speed Reading Tips**

- Once you start reading, don't stop! Read the text straight through. If you have any question after you have completed reading the material, go back and reread the relevant sections.
- Reread the marked sections of the text (the items you indicated that you didn't quite understand).

- Write a small summary at the beginning of the chapter – consisting about 3-4 sentences. If you ever need to return to the text, the information is much more easily found with summary markings.
- Read once. You can't read everything all at once (and wouldn't want to). If it's important, read it now. If it's not, let it wait.
- Read the title and the first paragraph more carefully than the other parts of the section.
- If there is a summary at the end of a chapter, read it.
- Get a grasp of how the material is organized.
- If you need more background, seek another source.
- A paper and a pen at hand while reading are helpful. Make sure to have both beside you before beginning to read.
- Use the cursor on computer as a pointer when you read text on the screen. The cursor will then act as a finger, and your eyes will most likely follow for moving object.
- Use a guide (pencil, finger, ruler, etc.) to stop regression.
- Train yourself to bypass your automatic response to mentally speak each word. Instead, read words and phrases at a time, using only the peripheral vision.
- When you are reading, it is often useful to **highlight**, underline, and annotate the text as you go on. This emphasizes information in the mind, and helps you to recall important details after reading the material.

- Underline relevant information in a section as if you were preparing brief notes from which you could study.
- Underline all definitions of terminology.
- Mark or label examples that represent main ideas.
- Circle and box special vocabulary words and transitional words and phrases.
- Number important or sequential ideas.
- Jot down paraphrases, questions, and summaries in available spaces within the text.

## **What Causes Slow Reading?**

- Reading word per word
- Longer time in reading chunks of words
- Eyes going back to a word or sentence previously read
- Unable to recognize and respond immediately to the material
- **Slow vocalization** and comprehension
- Incorrect eye movements and regression
- **Slow reading habits due to past reading experiences**
- Inattentiveness and absent-mindedness during reading
- Lack of practice and interest in reading

- Spending a lot of time on individual words to be able to sustain comprehension
- Poor recognition of important and unimportant things
- Remembering everything rather than selectively

Notice that these conditions also act to reduce comprehension. Thus, increasing your reading rate by eliminating all these may also result to increased comprehension.

### **Tips for Increasing Reading Rate**

- Improve your vocabulary. Expose yourself with new words so when you encounter them, you won't spend more time figuring out what they mean.
- Know your reading purpose. For main ideas only, skimming the material is already enough.
- Read faster by reading with the mind instead of with the lips.
- Read more! Take 15 minutes of your time a day reading an average size novel, magazines, or other books.
- Everyday, increase your reading rate by reading faster (about 2 to 3 times faster) than your normal speed.
- If reading concentration is poor, practice reading for 5 to 10 minutes only at a time. Gradually increase this rate over time.

## **Chapter 4**

# **Suggestions for Improving Speed and Effectiveness**

Slow, word-by-word, critical reading is an essential part of some reading tasks. However, when time and purpose is being considered, you must learn to adjust your reading speed and effectiveness.

Thus, speed reading is not applicable to all types of reading situations. Learning the skill will, however, enable you to add an additional dimension to the scope of your current reading skills.

## Major Causes of Slow Reading Speed

**Individual variables** such as intelligence, motivation, and physiological and psychological traits cause slow reading speed. Also included are:

- Deficiencies in **vocabulary and comprehension levels** required by the particular reading material greatly affects reading rate. Learning will not help a student who has difficulty understanding the reading material. In addition, learning will not help a student who is hindered by an inadequate vocabulary to skip any faster through unknown or vaguely defined words.
- **Inflexibility** – the tendency to read everything the same way regardless of what it is, why it is being read, etc.
- **Passivity** – the failure to become involved with the material being read; the failure to interact with the author and to anticipate his following thoughts.
- Unnecessary and habitual **regression** or re-reading due to lack of concentration.
- **Habitually slow "reaction time"** to reading material – a general "rut" which makes attempts at faster reading extremely uncomfortable at first.

## Where to Begin ... with Your Next Reading Assignment

- Determine your **PURPOSE** for reading: *What type of information do you really need the most? How long do you have to keep the information in mind? How useful this selection will be? Why was this reading assigned?*
- Be **FLEXIBLE**. Difficulty of the material and your purpose are the two factors that determine **how** to read a selection. Readers, especially college students, must realize that there are a number of reading speeds, not just one. These speeds must vary with the nature of the reading task – whether they are for leisure, as a review for tomorrow’s exam, etc. – and the reader's familiarity with the materials.
- **PREVIEW** the selection to be aware of its depth: *Are you familiar with the field of study being discussed in your reading material? How many essential words are in it?* Scan the introductions, subheads, italicized sentences, marginal notes, and conclusion first. Then, try to grasp the general thought structure the author wants to convey by integrating isolated clues.
- **READ**
  1. Make use of the **head start** you got during your preview.
  2. Read for **ideas** and concepts, not for isolated words only. Pace yourself fast enough that you have to read concepts, not words!
  3. Concentrate – if you push your rate up to capacity, you won't have time to think about other things. Set reasonable but stiff **time goals** and race the clock.
  4. Think, interpret, and analyze the **FIRST** time you read. Avoid unnecessary re-reading.

5. Note **key words** (subjects, verbs, objects). **TELEGRAPH** the message to yourself.
6. **Pace yourself** as fast as your purpose will permit. Pacing will discourage the tendency toward habitual and unnecessary re-reading and helps to keep your attention focused on the page. Try using one or several of the **SELF-PACING METHODS** discussed earlier. It might be uncomfortable and unnatural at first, but becomes most effective after the "newness" wears off.
  - **STRETCH** when your momentum seems to be slowing down. Stop, close your eyes, and squeeze them together tightly for a second, then open them wide. Play around for a few minutes by pacing yourself through "simulated" reading of a book held **upside** down, page by page, at extremely rapid speeds **JUST TO GET THE FEEL OF** rapid, rhythmic movement down the page again. With new momentum established, turn the book right side up again and continue reading at your fastest possible speed.
  - **TEST** yourself. Stop at the end of each "section" of material and recall periodically what you have just read. For materials in which you must remember for a certain period of time, practice reading quickly and efficiently with the **intent to recall** the important information at the end of each chapter, section, or paragraph – depending upon the difficulty of the material. Make notes or underline if appropriate.

## **Effective Reading Methods**

### ***Reading Daily News Method***

News is redundant – previewed yesterday, detailed today, and still will be summed up tomorrow. Thus, readers tend to not read news articles as extensively as other technical materials. Using this style of reading, called the Reading News Method, to other materials is useful. It disregards redundant information to save time.

You use the Reading News Method when you're reading from a report, newspaper, magazine, or newsletter. You skip what you already know and read only the new information you need.

### ***Reading Newspapers Method***

In reading newspaper articles, look through the headlines and first paragraphs only. Reporters present 80% of the key information of the news in the opening paragraph. The subsequent supporting text should be read only as needed. Follow these strategies:

- Ask yourself what other specific details you want.
- Skim the article for the desired details. Don't read all the words unless you have enough time.
- When finished with an article, go on to the next. This whole process should not take more than 10-15 minutes.

### ***Close Reading Method***

Close reading is the essence of the academic learning. It aims to acquire knowledge from materials with full retention of details. It divides into a number of separate steps, each vital, but ends as a whole.

Before reading a difficult piece of writing, take a few moments to close your eyes, relax, and

take 2-3 deep breaths. This way, you can get all the comfort you will need in reading. Believe that you can read with full concentration, recognize key information, and achieve high comprehension quickly to accomplish the needs. Believe you can, and you will.

This may simply sound like "positive mental attitude." But realization of everything begins with affirmation, doesn't it?

### ***Exploratory Reading Method***

Exploratory reading is the halfway point between skimming and close reading. It is similar to pleasure reading. You want to acquaint yourself with the subject, but you do not need complete understanding and retention. Perhaps you are reading supplementary material that you will not be held accountable for, or perhaps you only need to gain general knowledge from a text that will be available if you need to look up specific references.

### ***Reading to Learn Method***

Intensive reading or reading to learn is the style we employ when we want to gain a detailed understanding of the information contained in any reading materials, particularly educational or technical ones.

Following are some strategies on reading different academic materials that belong to this category:

#### **1. Reading Computer Books**

- Spend some time reading the chapter headings and sub-headings from the index page.
- Get familiar with the framework of the book – how the book is organized and broken down into

its sub-components.

- Skim the book: Read a sentence here, a sentence there. Look at a diagram here, a diagram there.
- Look for new terminology, diagrams, and graphs that you haven't come across before.
- After skimming the book, read the entire book through superficially. During this time, only concentrate on the sections of the book that you already know or understand, and completely skip over entries in the book that you don't.
- Lastly, read the book again and this time, study the material. A lot of the content, the structure, and the feel of the book will be familiar to you. You should be able to tackle the entire book much easier.

## **2. Reading Textbooks and Research Reports**

- Determine a purpose. What is it that you want to get from the printed page? Terms and definitions? Problem and solution? Research method?
- Preview the printed pages to see how the ideas are organized. These include the title, the introduction, and the headings. Also, read the conclusion if there is one.
- Read rapidly, only slowing down when you approach something relevant to the purpose you set.
- Mark the lines or words that you want to remember. When you reach the end of the last page, quickly look back at the marked text for a rapid review. This should answer the question or purpose that you set before you started reading.

## **3. Reading a Novel**

- Read any information on the book cover or in the foreword that gives you ideas about the content of the story or about the author's reasons for writing the book.
- Read the first chapter slowly and carefully. It should introduce the main characters and the problem or conflict that they face. The first chapter also develops some character traits and introduces other characters who influence attempts to resolve issues.
- Plan how much of the book you will read at one sitting. If you become seriously restless after thirty minutes, plan to read for thirty minutes at a time. A more mature plan is to read one chapter at a time.
- Determine what time of day you will always read making it a regular habit.
- If reading a novel is an assignment for a book report, write a summary paragraph about the events in every chapter you have finished reading. Add a comment about anything else you think is significant. After you finish the last chapter, you should have a summary of the entire book composed of those chapter summaries that you wrote. Organizing it will then give you a good and effective book report.
- You can also use a pacer such as the finger or a pen point to increase reading speed and reduce regressing back although it is not necessary. Remember, you are reading fiction and do not need the detailed precision that you do while reading academic subjects.

#### **4. Reading Math Books**

- First and foremost, do homework exercises even if most professors do not require you to submit them. Home works are for your benefit, not the professor's. The exercises will train your mind and sharpen your intuition.

### **sub-vo-ca-li-za-tion**

also Brit sub\*vo\*ca\*li\*sa\*tion

- Math books are meant to be read slowly. No one who speed reads them can expect to get any benefit out of them at all.

sub\*vo\*ca\*lize vb -ized also Brit -ised -iz\*ing also Brit -is\*ing

- Math books are meant to be read with paper and pencil in hand. Use the paper and pencil to work through any steps that the book skips over.

- Go over each difficult paragraph several times. If you are still uncomfortable with it, read ahead a page or so, then come back to the difficult passage.
- Try to see more than just procedures. Learn the concepts, and the procedures will seem obvious.

### ***Activate Reading Method***

During activation, you stimulate the brain, probing the mind with questions and exploring parts of the text to which you feel most attracted. You then concentrate on the most important parts of the text by scanning quickly down the center of each page or column of type. When you feel it is appropriate, you dip into the text for more focused reading to comprehend the details. When you activate, you involve your whole brain, connect the text with your conscious awareness, and achieve your goals for reading.

## **Chapter 5 Human Mind and Vocalization**

The human brain is divided into 2 primary parts, namely:

- Pronouncing of the words are produced in the **Broca Zone**, or slowly speed operation zone.
- Operation with words and its understanding are created in another zone called the **Vernike Zone**, or the speed operation zone.

Both zones of the brain are being used during reading activities (even when you don't pronounce the words). Slow brain operation + Speed brain operation = Slow operation. The zones responsible for pronunciation of the words reduce speed-read.

Vernike zone is found in the first temple convolutions of the brain. This part of the brain does not work with acoustic information. It is connected with crust of the brain (visual analyzer) but do not get visual information from the eyes.

It is responsible for understanding another person's speech. In addition, it is used in forming and shaping the main idea of speaking. It is not used for selecting words, but only ideas of speech. When this zone is damaged, one cannot understand what other people say.

On the other hand, the Broca zone is located in the third coronal brain. The motor images of the words are stored in this part of the brain. This zone is responsible for making man understand what another person speaks of, although he is unable to pronounce anything. Even when the Broca zone is

damaged, phonemic ear will not be broken and he can still clearly repeat the words.

## **Subvocalization is a Necessity**

The reason subvocalization, or silent reading, is not being advised by teachers is because professional academics believe it is unnecessary.

The three areas of the brain involved in such activity (excluding our eyes) are the Auditory Association Area (AAA) that handles complex processing of sound, Vernicke's Area (VA) that gives us comprehension of written and spoken language, and Brok's Area (BA) that creates speech production and articulation. In simpler terms, without subvocalization (or auditory reinforcement), there is no reading nor understanding of the spoken word. Subvocalization is a necessity, but not for every word, just for the ones not within our vocabulary.

## **Subvocalization: Good or Bad?**

**Subvocalization** is the tendency to pronounce words as they are read. Activating parts of the brain related to pronouncing limits the reading speed to 250 wpm only. This common flaw is what limits performance of average readers.

On the other hand, subvocalization is not always such a bad thing. Although it helps slow things down, it has a number of benefits rather than disadvantages. At the same time that verbalization reduces your reading speed, subvocalization might help in retaining information, simply because it repeats the ideas as they are formed in your mind.

Slowing down to subvocalize may either help you find meaning or may only provide meaningless distraction depending upon the source. Sometimes, it may be wise to choose to

comprehend without listening. However, there are times when we may not comprehend without listening.

The trouble with this is that you tend to lose a certain amount of processing on the info. If you speak this way, it may result in the phenomenon of "opening your mouth without thinking."

## **Eliminating Subvocalization to Increase Reading Speed**

Although subvocalization may be advantageous in certain ways, it limits your reading to the speed of normal speech to about 200-300 wpm only – not to be considered a “good” reading rate.

So how can we get rid of the “inner voice” that reduces our reading speed? Here are a number of ways to speed-read by eliminating subvocalization:

- Short cut the process.

As discussed earlier, below-average readers are slowed down when they read word for word. From this, they either verbally or mentally hear themselves voice each word before finally comprehending the meaning of each word. However, there is a better way. The faster way eliminates the practice of hearing your own voice reading each word - you glance at the word and go directly to understanding its meaning.

- Adjust the pacing.

This actually reinforces initial efforts to shortcut the process as stated above. Step up eye movements across the page to prevent the inner voice from actually verbally or mentally saying the text you are reading. Pick-up the pace of the finger, hand, pen, or card movements as you go over the material. The objective here is to distract you and skip the

subvocalization process in order to speed up the reading process.

- Always look at the reading material in its entirety.

When reading, people have the tendency to focus on the word or blocks of words only, paying no attention to the whole thought and idea expressed in the sentence, paragraph, and reading material as a whole. Shift the focus on the entire idea expressed in the book, article, or any reading material you are holding.

Constant practice with these techniques increases the number of words read at each eye stop and picks up your pace in reading.

## **Do You Vocalize Words in your Mind as You Read?**

When you're reading a book, can you hear your voice as if you're the narrator of the story? If you don't, then good for you. You don't have to undergo a process of eliminating the voice within the inner you that silently pronounces the words you're reading.

But for those who habitually talk or pronounce words as they read, how is it not to vocalize?

Don't attempt to eliminate subvocalization just to enhance your reading skills. Because many individuals talk faster than they can read, subvocalization is still necessary in improving reading speeds. The key to using subvocalization to its advantage is to subvocalize only the essential words. Isn't it that when you are reading something that you've already read before, or have been reading many times, so that you are already familiar with what it's saying, you can just look at the words and immediately recognize what it says without having to hear them?

## **Eliminate the Habit of Pronouncing Words as You Speed Read**

One key to reading at a much faster rate is learning not to mouth the words while trying to read. It is important to develop the habit of seeing the words, but not reading them to yourself. The rate in which you speak is a lot slower than the rate in which you are capable of reading. Try to see the words instead of mouthing each individual word.

Instead of seeing a book during reading, your brain hears a voice that pronounces the word sounds printed on the page. Quite simply, you don't see a book - you hear it. This is what happens to most of us when reading; but it shouldn't be the case. Vision is faster and more powerful than hearing. By becoming a visual reader, you will instantly increase your reading speed. Let's begin this process together.

Eliminate the **habit of pronouncing words** as you read. If you sound out words in your throat or whisper them, you can read slightly only as fast as you can read aloud. You should be able to read most materials at least two or three times faster silently than orally. If you are aware of sounding or "hearing" words as you read, try to concentrate on key words and meaningful ideas as you force yourself to read faster.

The eyes move across the written page in a series of quick jumps, or what we have defined earlier as fixation. By speeding up the eye movements, the eyes make fewer fixations and take in more words per fixation. This helps break the habit of subvocalization, since your eyes will be moving faster than you can possibly subvocalize.

## **Stop Talking to Yourself When You Speed Read**

Don't read aloud to yourself. Generally, reading aloud to yourself does not help you study more

effectively. If you move your lips while you read, you're not reading efficiently. If you read aloud or move your lips while you're reading, you are reading slowly, so stop moving your lips. **Try putting a finger over your lips.** Your finger will remind you not to move your lips. Make an effort to read faster and retain more. After a while, you'll be surprised how little effort it will take.

Getting back to reading and how we learn, one of the biggest reasons why we learned to read incredibly slow in the first place is that as a child in school, we learned to read by sounding out the words. When we pronounce the words, we have to read with the tongue. Our tongue can only pronounce about 200 to 400 words a minute. According to the 'latest' research, our memory is not stored in our tongue.

People talk to themselves in 2 ways, by:

- Vocalizing, which is the actual moving of your lips as you read
- Subvocalizing, which is talking to yourself in your head as you silently read

Both of these will slow you down to the point in which you find that you can't read any faster than you can speak. Speech is a relatively slow activity; for most, the average speed is about 250 wpm.

## **Chunk Four Words**

Humans speak one word at a time, and not four words at the same time. Chunking the phrase “speed reading is necessary,” we get: speedreadingisnecessary. With this, sub-vocalization is reduced, thus requiring us to pronounce a four-word phrase to a single word.

**Chunking** is the process of looking at groups of words using our peripheral vision. The more

we take in words simultaneously, say 4 to 5 words at a time, the more we ruin the pronunciation of words...until, eventually, sub-vocalization is totally distorted.

## **Use of a Pen or Finger**

Using a pen or a finger as a reading tool is actually optional rather than necessary. In fact, some experts discourage this artificial way of pacing oneself. According to them, following a pen, finger, or any other tool moving across a page with your eyes while reading could make it impossible to grasp everything you ought to read because everything becomes a blur! Isn't it that absorbing larger chunks of words per line at a time is actually the idea behind developing your reading speed?

# Chapter 6

## Getting the Main Idea

Getting the main idea in reading is central to effective studying. **You must learn what the author's central idea is and understand it in your own way.** Every paragraph contains a main idea. Main ideas are perfect for outlining textbooks. Make it a habit to find the main idea in each paragraph you read.

### Extracting Important Details

Extracting important details means that you locate in your reading the main and most significant ideas. There is usually one important detail associated with every main idea. The more important details you can identify, the easier it will be to review for examinations. This is because you have made a link between an idea and information that supports it. **The more links you can make between details and ideas, as well as ideas themselves, the more powerful will be the efforts of your study.**

The first things to ask yourself are: “Why you are reading the text? Are you reading with a purpose or just for pleasure? What do you want to know after reading it?” In other words, identify your purpose.

Once you know this, you can examine the text to see whether it is going to move you towards this goal. An easy way of doing this is to look at the introduction and the chapter headings. The introduction should let you know whom the book is targeted at, and what it seeks to achieve. Chapter headings will give you an overall view of the structure of the subject.

After grasping ideas from chapter introductions, ask yourself whether the book meets your

needs. Ask yourself if it assumes too much or too little knowledge. If the book is not ideal, would it be better to find a better one?

Take 1-2 minutes to **skim** through the paragraphs to find the core idea. Know what is being expressed. Know what you need. Read lightly and flexibly. Slow down to fulfill your purpose, answering questions that are most important to you. Since very few words carry the meaning, speed up to pass redundant or useless information.

## How "So What" Questions Help in Speed Reading

Appreciation is a very simple but powerful technique for extracting the maximum amount of information from a simple fact.

Starting with a fact, ask the question "So what?" - i.e. What are the implications of that fact? Keep on asking that question until all possible inferences have been drawn. Let's take, for instance, a military example shown below:

- **Fact:** It rained heavily last night
- *So what?*
- The ground will be wet
- *So what?*
- It will turn into mud quickly
- *So what?*

- If many troops and vehicles pass over the same ground, movement will be progressively slower and more difficult as the ground gets muddier and more difficult.
- *So what?*

Ask questions for learning. The important things to learn are usually answers to questions.

Questions should lead to emphasis on the *what, why, how, when, who* and *where* of study content. Ask the questions as you read or study.

As you answer them, you will help to make sense of the material and remember it more easily because the process will make an impression on you. Those things that make impressions are more meaningful, and therefore more easily remembered. Don't be afraid to write the questions in the margins of textbooks, on lecture notes, or any available spaces. The more these notes are accessible to you, the more you will be able to remember and learn them quickly.

## **Be an Active Reader**

Before you even look at the text, scan it, and read it, ask first the question, "What am I going to learn here? What is the author's conclusion? How does the author present the topic? What are the key points to the argument?" Such questions function to engage you in the activity. If you ask a question in a lecture, you always remember the answer to the question. Similarly, if you become an "active reader," you are much more likely to retain the information that you amass.

## **Answer the Questions at the End of each Chapter**

Most academic textbooks that students own contain exercises or quizzes at the end of each

chapter to evaluate them on how much they have learned during the whole reading activity. It would be very helpful to answer these questions. If you have come across an item in which you can't really answer, go back and read.

Think about the text in three ways.

1. Consider the text itself, the basic information right there on the page.  
(This is the level of most high school readers and many college students).
2. Next, think about what is between the lines, the conclusions, and inferences the author means you to draw from the text.
3. Finally, go beyond thinking about the text. What creative, new, and different thoughts occur as you combine the knowledge and experiences with the ideas in the reading?

## **Question While You Are Surveying**

- Make questions out of the titles, headings, and/or subheadings;
- Read and study questions as each chapter ends;
- Ask the question, "Why did my instructor assign us to read this chapter or section?"
- Ask the question, "How familiar am I about this subject?"

This variation belongs to what we call the SQ3R Method. This method has been a proven way to sharpen study skills.

Stop reading periodically to recall what you have read. Try to recall main headings, important ideas of concepts presented in bold or italicized type, and what graphs charts or illustrations indicate. Try to develop an overall concept of what you have read. Try to connect things you have just read to things you already know. When you do this periodically, the chances are you will remember much more and be able to recall material for papers, essays, and objective tests.

## **Reading Critically**

If you are not satisfied with the basic understanding of a text, this advice sheet will give you some ideas on how to read between the lines. In other words, you will be able to distinguish opinions from facts; and you will be able to form your own judgment on the issues raised in a text. This advice sheet will also give you advice on how to make use of text organization to understand a text.

### ***Recite After Each Section***

- Ask the questions about what you have just read, and/or summarize what you read even in your own words.
- While recalling ideas from the text, use your own words in discussing.
- Underline (some even use highlighters or colored markers) important ideas in the text.
- Know what method of recitation best suits your learning style. Remember: you are more likely to recall what you have read when you use more, if not all, of your senses.

### ***What Types of Reading Reflect Flexibility?***

Preparation for a very difficult and unfamiliar course or for a new and complex scientific theory

may demand that you read to remember everything. Here you are probably reading about 200 to 250 words per minute. You read small groups of words and frequently reread for clarification. You may find yourself mouthing the words. In these situations, you read to remember everything.

Working on a research project may demand that you read a wide range of related literature in search of possible solutions to problems or of new information to support or deny an issue. Many of the ideas in these materials will be familiar to you. In fact, ideas that appeared on one source may also appear on the other. But since you are looking for the new and different, this allows you to race rapidly over the known information and to slow down to analyze the new. Consequently, you need a strategy that allows you to efficiently tackle each document.

Spare time may allow you to relax with a good novel or a favorite magazine. Pleasure reading appears to demand very little of you. But you often carefully skim over the descriptions of the scenery to focus on the action of the main characters. Those who delight in a leisurely perusal of the Sunday morning newspaper often skip articles by noting the headlines and moving on to topics of interest.

### ***What Factors Outside Your Control Influence Your Speed of Reading?***

Background knowledge about certain subjects has a powerful influence and helps on your reading speed. If you already know a lot about the topic of the material, you may glance at it and discard it as a waste of time. Alternatively, you may race through the reading, mentally predicting what comes next. You do not reread anything because you feel confident that you understand it. No vaguely recognized words can slow you down.

On the other hand, if you do not know much about the subject, you must read slowly in an attempt to absorb the new ideas and eventually lock them down together with the old information you already know. Occasionally, vocabulary becomes the greater problem. You may have to reach for the

dictionary for clarification. You may reread a sentence or a paragraph to figure out what the author is suggesting.

A problem for people who use English as a second language is that they have the knowledge, but they don't have the equivalent English word translation for what they know. Children who have not been read to before entering school are at a disadvantage when they enter first grade and try to learn to read. They know English, but they don't know "book talk." Written English is different from spoken English. Similarly, people who grew up speaking a different dialect or a different language often must slow down as they read to adjust to the sentence structure of standard written English. Here, frequent reading of popular or of professional materials, though boring and uninteresting, strengthens your comprehension of standard written sentence structure.

## **Tips for Developing Good Eyesight**

Good eyesight is an important factor in developing effective reading skills. To make sure your children develop both good eyesight and the visual skills needed for reading while using the computer, consider the following reminders:

1. Remember that "eyesight" is different from "vision". The former is the ability to "see" (which most children are born with) while the latter is the ability to organize, interpret, and understand what is actually seen. Vision is developed and learned like other abilities such as walking and talking. Your children require both good "eyesight" and good "vision" to become excellent readers – not just either of the two, as they are not the same.

2. 20/20 eyesight doesn't always mean that your children see the printed page or computer screen the same way you do. It is actually the distance sight indicator and simply means that your children can see a certain size of letter from 20 feet away. It is not at all related to reading at near point. To monitor problems on vision grades, have your children read aloud to you often, to insure that what they see on the printed page and computer screen is the same thing you are seeing.
3. Good vision means that your children are being able to use both of their eyes as a team to track smoothly from line to line, see at far and near, copy from a book to paper, keep letters in proper order, and much more. Any disturbing behavior in the visual process can affect reading, especially if the visual memory is under stress due to excessive computer, TV, or gadgets use.
4. Train your children to look away from the computer screen and focus on something in the distance every few minutes while using the computer. Also, check to see whether their head is too close to the screen.
5. On a regular basis, let your children play catch outside, ride a bike, and participate in sports. These activities can improve crucial reading abilities like tracking, focusing, peripheral vision, eye teaming, and eye-hand coordination. These can strengthen near- and far- point vision. Many of these skills are not typically learned during sustained computer use.
6. Limit children's computer use. Children, especially those under three

years of age, should not be used to staring at the computer screen as it can ruin their eyesight while still at a very young age. Instead, they should be exposed more on developmental skills not involving computers like crawling, walking, talking, spatial awareness, tracking, and focusing, among others.

## **Speed Reading Calculating**

To monitor if you're making progress in increasing your reading speed, you should know how to calculate it. Don't worry! There is a simple way in doing this. In reading a page of a book at a comfortable tempo, count the number of words in the first few lines – whatever number of lines you feel is representative of the page as a whole. Count the total number of lines in the page, as well. The following formula can help you calculate your reading speed:

*Divide the number of lines in the page by the number of lines used for the word count.*

*Multiply it by the number of words in the word count.*

*Finally, divide the answer by the number of minutes it took you to read the page.*

Easy, isn't it? Only 3 simple mathematical processes are what it takes to know your reading speed! Then again, if you increase the number of lines in which you do the word count, or the number of pages you read, the accuracy of your calculation will increase as well. However, one page is usually enough.

The average reading speed is about 265 wpm, though it usually ranges from 250 to slightly over 300.

To measure **reading speed rate**, consider a certain reading material and select a section of text from it. Mark the beginning of the selection you decided to read. Read for a particular length of time – use a timer or watch to help you time your activity – or for a certain amount of text (about three to five paragraphs or one page). Also, mark the end of the selection and note the total time you spent reading.

To measure the level of comprehension, recall main ideas from the selection. The rule is if you have read a particular text in a reading material for three minutes, you should remember three main points. If you have reads for five minutes, you should be able to know five main ideas.

Count the number of words from the beginning to the ending mark. Divide this total number of words by the number of minutes you spent reading. This is now your rate of reading expressed in words per minute. There are actually two simple steps involved in performing your speed test: a selection to read and the time it takes for you to read it.

The best way to calculate the number of words without counting it one by one is using estimation. Turn to a “full” page in your book, somewhere which is not the beginning or end of a chapter. Pick a full line at random and count the number of words. Usually, this line will consist of 10 to 12 words. Then, count the number of lines in the page so that if you multiply the first number you have to it, you will have an estimate of the number of words per page in that particular book. However, this will vary from book to book, so you should make a new calculation when you use a different book.

To illustrate the above procedures, let’s say you are going to do a five-minute speed reading test. Be sure to have your clock ready or have a friend time you. Mark the part in your book you will start reading with a pencil or take note of the page number. Signal your timekeeper to begin reading for understanding. When the 5 minutes is up, stop and mark your position on the final page. Go back then to your starting page and count the total number of pages you have read.

Multiply this number by the number of words per page calculated earlier. If you haven't finished reading all the words on the final page, just add the number of words you have read on it on the product you got by multiplying the number of pages by the total number of words in each page. The over-all answer is actually the number of words you have read in 5 minutes. Finally, divide this number by 5 to get your words per minute.

Note that it is advisable to start reading at the beginning of a chapter so that the effect of half pages is minimized. Do not worry too much about the "exact" number of words read as the estimates are reasonably accurate, and it is the increases in your reading speed that you will find most interesting.

## **Double Your Reading Speed**

In today's business world, ordinary reading skills are not sufficient for you to keep up with the increasing amount of information. If you read at 200-250 words per minute, like most people, you are at a great disadvantage. Learning how to read quickly is actually not difficult and many people will improve their reading speed just by understanding what goes on in their eyes when they read.

What is also important, besides reading quickly, is to understand the information read and how to retain that information. What good is a speed reader if he doesn't understand a thing he reads? Thus, high-speed reading, together with complete comprehension, gives you an opportunity to reach your highest potential as a leader in your field of work.

Information is power. The more you know, the more powerful you become.

To be at the cutting edge of your business, you have to know more than others in your field. Fortunately, information is abundant and obtaining it is as easy as a few clicks on your computer. The

challenge is gathering and deciphering useful data that gives you the lead.

High-speed reading is one of your most important tools to gain ample information that may make other people see that you deserve to be recognized

Many of the most successful business people you know are probably speed readers. They have to be quick to effectively deal with all the information necessary to run successful organizations and businesses. Though they may not talk about their high-speed reading skills, we are certain that those are what brought them to where they are now. They might not be telling you because they don't want to reveal their advantage over you! It's their edge.

# Conclusion

All people have their own individual weaknesses. Some may find it as one of their enemies and some may find it as a hindrance to growth.

But we must all remember that every weakness has a solution, and overcoming a weakness can lead to improvement. For speed reading, I suggest that you first search what hinders you from achieving your goal. Find out the best way to overcome that weakness and apply the appropriate tips and suggestions discussed in this book.

Speed reading is one of the best ways to improve not only your reading and comprehension skills, but also your memory. It can enrich your vocabulary of words.

Try to apply the techniques suggested in this book. You will not only improve, but will also find yourself learning more and exceeding.

If you need some additional help with learning the strategies included in this guide, take a look at our [recommended speed reading software programs](#). These will help you practice the techniques we suggest.