

THE

**SPEED  
READING**

CRASH COURSE

## INTRODUCTION

If you want to increase your reading speed, that's exactly what we this ebook from learnhowtospeedread.org has achieved: a compact but powerful learning resource that you can master and put to use in a matter of hours (or minutes- depending on your reading speed which will get quicker as you make use of the speed reading tricks discussed here!) Packed in its 6 pages, you will find the most essential and effective techniques for speed reading. Within this one short information-laden session you will discover all the most beneficial methods even as you read up on fundamental speed reading knowledge.

But before we get into that, let's take a look into why Speed Reading is important. There is one attribute common to people who perform excellently, both, at schools and workplaces. They are able to take in more information, take it in more quickly, process it faster and retain it better. All of this is possible because they are able to read faster without a reduction in comprehension levels. And that is the real objective of Speed Reading: To increase reading speed while enhancing comprehension levels. Most slow readers read at the average speed of 150 to 200 words per minute. That is just not enough to survive in today's competitive scenario. Speed Readers (who, coincidentally, are also the top performers at their jobs) read at speeds over 400 words per minute at least without a toll on their comprehension levels. Using the techniques discussed in this course, you will also be able to do just that. So let's get started!

## USE THE POWER OF METAGUIDING

Evelyn Wood, the pioneer of Speed Reading (she also coined the phrase) came up with this breakthrough technique. And she discovered it in a really interesting way. Irritated by how little she had read in a certain time span, she threw down her book. Then deciding it wasn't really the book's fault, she decided to pick it up again. While trying to wipe off the dirt that had smeared across its pages, she discovered that the sweeping motion of her hand made her eyes focus better. Hence she concluded that a visual guide helps to direct one's eyes across text better. This technique is known as 'metaguiding'. Here's what you need to do to utilize it towards becoming a speed reader.

Using a pointer, such as your finger or a pen, trace the sentences on a page as you read them. This visual guidance will direct your eyes better and the increased focus will make you progress faster. "Invisibly" underlining sentences is not the only way to use this strategy. In fact, research has shown that any invisible patterns that you draw across a block of text with your pointer increases focus. Even the downward motion of a hand over a page, as Evelyn Wood initially discovered, does the trick. Metaguiding of any type guides your eyes and also increases your visual span. Another variation of the metaguiding technique comes in the form of pacers. You can use a pacer (for instance, a piece of paper or cardboard) to direct your vision as well as hide the words/sentences you've just read. The latter helps in reducing Regression (which is a Speed Reading barrier we will discuss in the next section).

### GOOD TO KNOW

*We read through 'eye fixations':  
Our eyes focus on a word(s)  
before flitting away to the  
following word(s).*

*Your 'Visual Span' is all that your  
eyes can see in one glance. In a  
reading context it entails the  
amount of words visible to you in  
a single eye fixation.*

The benefits of metaguiding, especially for beginners, are manifold and well documented. Not only has it been proven to speed up reading but also prevent bad reading habits like the aforementioned Regression and Subvocalization (another obstacle to Speed Reading you will read about in the next section).

## **JUST SAY NO TO SUBVOCALIZING AND REGRESSION**

Slow reading speeds can be attributed to a variety of factors but two of the most major ones are 'subvocalizing' and 'regression'. Let's take a look at each of them and how you can avoid them.

### **SUBVOCALIZING**

You might not even realize you are already a victim of this practice. In fact, you might be subvocalizing right now. So what is it anyway? Subvocalizing is the act of mouthing the words you read. It's when you 'read to yourself' and you sound out the words in front of you.

Whether you are subvocalizing in a low audible voice, just moving your lips as you read or sounding them out in your mind, you are slowing yourself down. The reason is that because when we subvocalize, we limit ourselves to the speed we sound out words at when we speak- and the average speaker isn't able to audibly speak more than 150 to 200 words. Of course, going faster than that isn't necessary when you're speaking to someone (or you would just come across as a very fast talker and might even jumble your words). But when you are reading, you want to go through the material as quickly as possible. Therefore, it's necessary to stop yourself from subvocalizing when you read. Another reason why subvocalizing reduces reading speed is that you involve your mind in speech activities while it should only be focused on taking in words and comprehending them.

Subvocalizing is not limited to slow readers. Even speed readers tend to subvocalize now and then. The trick is to be aware of it and make efforts towards reducing it. You can do so by being a visual reader. A visual reader is someone who just engages his vision when he's reading- he follows the ideas expressed in any material- and is not concerned with how the words in it are pronounced or sound like. The visual reader comprehends the material as it is and does not focus on its audible aspects.

Here is an example of taking in ideas in terms of what they mean- and not what they sound:

When a friend of yours tells you about their great time vacationing in Hawaii, you are able to absorb their account of the story instantly as they relate it. You don't spend time analyzing how they vocalize the words they are using to relate the story. You can apply this same visual, ideas-based and meaning-centric approach to reading. Pretty soon, you will have satisfactorily cured your subvocalizing habit.

Following is a quick exercise in visualizing instead of stringing words together one by one and sounding them out:

When you see the word '*intelligent*', you don't have to read out its four syllables in order to recognize the word and know what it meant. Now consider the sentence '*He is an intelligent man*'. Try to take this sentence in one gulp as you did with the single word. You will have successfully avoided the subvocalizing you would have done if you had read it from word to word.

### **REGRESSION**

Regression is usually due to a lack of confidence in one's reading abilities. We are often tempted to reread the words or sentences we have just read because we think we might have read them wrong. The truth is that you probably read them right the first time and you are only wasting your time when you go over them

again. A good way to reduce the practice of Regression is by the use of pacers- as discussed in the previous section.

## **WORK WITH CLUMPS AND WORD GROUPS**

Grouping has always had an interesting relation with the way our mind functions. When you are able to read a small group of words (around 4 to 16 words) in one eye fixation, you are able to read faster. This small group of words is called a clump and reading it in one glance allows you to quickly work your way through any long reading material. For you to be able to take in more than one word at a time you will need a bigger visual span. A technique for increasing visual span is discussed in the section. Here, let's look at ways you can use clumps to your advantage even more effectively:

### **Use invisible columns**

Ever wondered why newspaper text is written in columns? That's because the text in any column is a collection of ready-made clumps: You can easily take them in one by one in single eye fixations. Now when you read block text, such as in most books and reading material, try to visualize the text as if it were divided into columns. As practice, draw vertical lines across a page of text and read words on both sides of the lines. This will enhance your ability to read in clumps.

### **Read in more than one direction!**

Our eyes don't read just across the linear horizontal direction. Our vision span takes in the clump we are fixating on as well as what's next to it- which means words above and below, and to the right and left. When you are able to see a collection of words in one glance, you are immediately able to see their relation to each other and your mind is able to visualize the idea being presented. The entire process speeds up your reading. You can practice taking in words vertically by trying to read a book sideways.

### **Utilize your peripheral vision**

When we read we focus on a single word or clump and that's the unit we are able to comprehend. However, we are also able to see the objects (words) surrounding it. By training yourself to absorb those units as well, you can comprehend everything your vision span covers. You can practice using your peripheral vision by slowly working your way to read more of what you're able to see in a single eye fixation.

## **WORD GROUPS**

A clump that represents a coherent idea is called a word group. When you take it in a single eye fixation, you immediately visualize the idea that is presented. And you also manage to avoid subvocalizing because you don't read it one word at a time. Take the following sentence:

*He succeeds because he is a hard worker.*

The slow reader, who has a narrow vision span, will only understand the idea being conveyed in the sentence when he reaches the last word (and he will also subvocalize because he is able to do so when he is reading one word at a time). But when you take the above sentence in one lump, you are instantly able to understand what is being said and you haven't wasted your time in reading it word by word and subvocalizing.

A tip: Word groups that are instantly comprehensible are idioms. When you know a lot of idioms, you are able to recognize them immediately and don't spend time reading them through. Familiarity with vocabulary and language structure also plays a similar role. You can improve all these metrics by reading a lot. The more you read, the more accustomed you will get to common word usages and writing structure and the more you will be able to read in clumps and word groups.

## SKIM EFFECTIVELY BY EXPANDING YOUR VISION

Being objective-oriented has its benefits- in life and in speed reading. Knowing what you want to obtain from reading a certain material is sure to increase your reading speed. In any reading material- especially fiction- there is often a lot of detail that complements the narrative but is not essential to it. Knowing the parts you can skip without losing comprehension of the main point made any text is a skill that forms the basis of skimming- a highly effective speed reading technique.

The more accurately you understand your reading objective, the more skilled you will be able to distinguish between text blocks that you can skip, the ones that you should just go through quickly and the ones you should read carefully and slowly.

While it's highly dependent on the type of reading material, a rule of the thumb is to read the Introduction and Conclusion of any text carefully as these include the most crucial information on the objective, nature and implications of the material. It's the Body that you can skim. The body of the text usually includes a lot of detail that you should go through if you need complete understanding- as in the case of technical or scientific manuals. But if you just want a basic idea of what the text is about, you can skim and skip through the body.

Because skimming involves rushing through large blocks of text but still maintaining a vague idea of the narrative, you will need to improve your clumping and visualizing abilities as well as widen your vision span. The more words you will be able to see in a single eye fixation, the faster you will be able to read. You can work on increasing your vision span by starting with the simple exercise below. Use a pacer to hide all the other numbers in the table as you glance just once at a single number and try to reproduce it. Work your way from the first column of 4-digit numbers to the last column containing 7-digit numbers. The aim is for you to be able to read and retain a bigger number in an eye fixation of the same length.

Vision Expansion Exercise			
8340	84793	947539	9458464
4346	53457	894548	0454384
7586	34532	573285	5464640
4343	57575	685448	9754836
8654	46923	904564	8964856
4643	57447	590674	9453453
6436	36363	890073	5907549
8686	56078	534854	9543553
7425	34073	905733	9832535

5782	46474	436446	6437995
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## TIPS

Now that you have read all about the major speed reading techniques, it's time to start applying them. But just before you do that, here are some useful tips that will not only help in making you read faster but also ensure that you get maximum pleasure from what you read.

- **Before you start, make sure you find out your current reading speed.** This will not only help you in evaluating your standing but also help you in setting goals for yourself and monitoring your progress. You can find out your reading speed by simply timing yourself using a stopwatch. The standard is to count the number of words you are able to read in a minute. Test yourself reading different blocks of text and then calculate the average of your scores. This will help you in getting an accurate estimate of your reading speed. Most importantly, don't cheat! Test yourself at your normal speed.
- **Always choose a comfortable and peaceful place to read.** The less you are surrounded by distractions (for example: your cell phone ringing, your family hanging around you and talking, and your favorite show on your TV set) or unpleasant stimuli (such as loud noises, bad smells, poor lighting), the faster you will read the material at hand.
- **Get your eye sight checked.** An often overlooked pre-requisite, many people aren't even aware that their slow reading speeds are due to poor vision or optical conditions like dyslexia. Seeing your optician before you work your way through this course will not only be beneficial to your speed reading agenda but it will, more importantly, also be a favor to your personal well-being.
- **Read as much as you can.** Practice is essential to becoming a Speed Reader and the best type of practice is reading books and magazines. You will not only become a more cultured, educated and well-rounded person but you will also breeze through huge volumes of text. Reading also improves your vocabulary and a good vocabulary is essential to being a speed reader.

Good luck and Happy Reading!

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