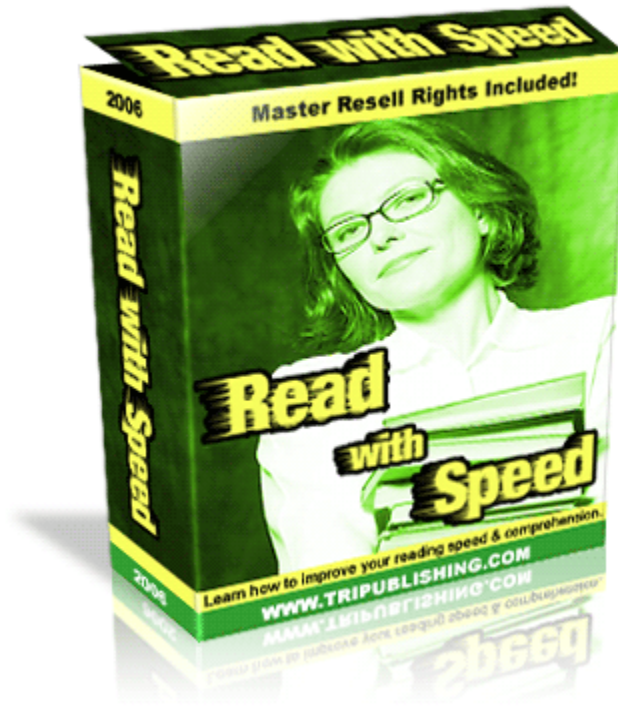


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What is Speed Reading?

Speed Reading Explained

Speed reading or rapid reading is basically a process that allows a person to read a text at an increased speed. This can be done by skimming or selectively reading certain words or phrases that are relevant to the text.

The average reading comprehension rate of an individual is around 75%. However, some methods individuals employ to achieve speed reading significantly cuts into this figure, as much as less than 50%. When this happens a reader's comprehension level is compromised. Under this condition it would be very difficult for a person to learn or study new materials.

Many, many books have been devoted to the topic of speed reading. Individuals who want to increase their reading speed have also invested a lot of money on courses that teach speed reading techniques.

Many reading experts have mixed feelings about speed reading. It has been said that speed reading is not appropriate for all reading, especially since the comprehension level tend to decrease during the process of speed reading.

Anything below 50% reading comprehension is considered to many as a failure. Therefore, some argue that speed reading is not conducive to learning.

When scholars did some research on speed readers, they determined that speed readers were not as good at drawing out details as those readers who were just instructed to skim the text.

This has been attributed to the fact that some speed readers have been trained to increase their speed of reading without paying much heed if they actually are absorbing the information they are receiving.

Many advocates of speed reading claim that speed reading increases IQ and memory. But others claim that this is not the case, and they have gone as far as to take legal action against those businesses that offer speed reading courses that have made this claim.

The problem with speed reading is that a person's ability to process information is sometimes compromised. Subvocalization- this is when you hear your own voice in your head. This plays a big part in a person's ability to understand the information that he or she is reading. Some speed readers avoid subvocalizing to increase their reading speed. This is why some reading experts claim that their ability to comprehend suffers.

Some tips on how to speed read:

1. Before actually reading the text, preview the material that you are about to read first. This way you would have an idea on what your topic is about. Read the title, heading of the paragraph; assess how long the material is, etc. This way you would develop a sense of familiarity with the material you're about to read.
2. Devise a plan on how you are going to tackle reading the material. You might want to spend a little bit longer on some paragraphs than others, depending on the complexity of the text.
3. Focus on the keywords. This way, you don't spend a lot of time reading every word. Some words can be omitted while reading, such as the word 'the'.
4. Certain sentences don't need to be read word by word. Just extract the essence of the sentence, or a paragraph.
5. Avoid regression- this is when you go back to reread words that you have just read.

Speed reading requires a lot of practice to execute. This method largely consists of skimming, (also referred to as auditing) which

clocks in at around 700 wpm (words per minute). The average reading rate is around approximately 200-250wpm.

Those who rate at around 10,000 wpm are said to belong in the autistic category, such as Kim Peek.

Kim Peek, an autistic savant, has been said to read at an incredible speed while retaining comprehension and memory. He was the person that served as the inspiration for the character of Dustin Hoffman in the movie Rain Man.

It is no doubt that speed reading has many benefits. This is why many people spend a lot of money enrolling in speed reading courses in hopes of trying to acquire this skill. But some experts say that this is not necessary.

Some community colleges offer seminars on how to learn the techniques of speed reading. Also, skimming and other techniques on how to improve one's reading comprehension can be practiced at home. Something that will surely help a person read faster!

How We Learned to Read Slowly

Reasons Why Some People Read Slowly

Do you ever wonder why some people can go through books so rapidly, and others take forever to finish a thin paperback novel?

Is the ability to read at an increased pace something that a person is born with or something that they develop over time? And what about that super slow reader is there still hope for them?

Well, to go back to the source of this issue, it has been assessed by reading experts that the way we learn to read as a child directly affects the type of readers we become in the future.

It is usually during childhood that we form bad reading habits that we carry on to our adulthood. This contributes to why some people are slow readers.

One of the earliest ways children learn how to read is through subvocalization. This is when you read the words that you hear out loud in your head. Some people even mouth out the words to themselves. Reading experts say that this is how we learn to develop comprehension, and absorb the information we are receiving.

Supporters of speed reading frown at subvocalization. They claim that this slows down the speed of their reading.

Certain words are so familiar to us that we don't even unconsciously subvocalize. This is because we naturally make the connection with the meanings of these words since they are so familiar to us. Some examples of these words are: brand name products we are familiar with, road signs, etc.

Individuals who want to try to read faster consciously make an effort to lessen their subvocalization during reading. The average reading speed of a person is around 250 words per minute accompanied by a reading comprehension level of around 60%.

It is one thing to be able to read fast, but another to actually comprehend and absorb the information that you are reading. This is why there are a lot of people that are opposed to speed reading as a technique to be used for learning since most speed readers' comprehension level fall under 50%. That means that plenty of details about a given material, and its relevance may be lost when they attempt to get through these texts through the method of speed reading.

Some of the bad reading habits that individuals possess they have nurtured over a lifetime. Being taught by a slow reader is especially detrimental to a child since he or she might pass on some bad reading habits to the child.

Some bad reading habits include:

1. Vocalizing while reading. Basically this means reading the words out loud.
2. Reading a text one word at a time. Not only does this decrease a person's reading speed. Also, it has been said by reading experts that reading word by word decreases a reader's understanding of the material. Reading words by grouping expand a reader's understanding of the text as a whole.
3. Regressing. This means going back to reread words, or sentences that have been read because it has become a habit, and not because of necessity. This accounts a great deal as to why some individuals are slow readers.

Another thing that contributes to a child becoming a slow reader is fostering a negative attitude towards reading. Thinking that reading is boring, or that watching a movie, or playing video games instead of reading is not going to help a child read any faster.

A child will just become restless and anxious to get the task of reading over with if he or she is burdened with this type of mentality.

If this type of attitude does not get corrected, a child would grow up harboring these negative feelings toward reading.

Most children start learning how to read at around 6 or 7 years of age. It is important that the child is not forced to learn how to read until he or she is ready, because this will add an additional burden and frustration to the child, which may result in reading problems.

Most people who are slow readers are not so because they lack the ability to read faster. It is because of these bad habits that they have formed over the years that they have learned to become slow readers.

Luckily, this is a problem that can be remedied. By breaking these bad reading habits, slow readers can slowly become faster readers!

Who Needs Speed Reading?

"Is Speed Reading for You?"

During childhood, a person begins to translate symbols, letters and sounds into words and sentences which have meaning. This skill is developed into reading, and is further enhanced later in life through comprehension and speed.

With this skill, people learn to comprehend written material. Thus, they gain knowledge and are able to use the skill and apply it in their everyday lives. Even the simple task of reading a daily newspaper requires reading skills.

Americans now live in a society where information is vital. In business, people who have better reading and comprehension abilities are more likely to have high-paying jobs than the average reader.

Thus, speed reading was developed. This is known as the ability to read as many words as you possibly can per minute.

The question is, is it really necessary? There are a lot of advertisements now bragging about the benefits of speed reading.

Before tackling this further, take a look at the following statistics:

The average person can read approximately 250 to 300 words per minute (wpm).

For comprehension to be best achieved by a competent reader, you should be able to read 200-350 wpm.

If you can read about 700 words per minute, then you are more than doubling the average reading speed. This, of course, should have at least 90% comprehension.

For a college student, 250-350 wpm is normal for non-technical materials and fictional books.

What is considered a good reading speed is 500-700 words.

As we discussed in the last chapter, there are a lot of web sites on the Internet, courses offered and advertisements which claim to give you the ability to read 10,000 words or more per minute.

The methods that they apply rely on more visual or photographic recollection. This type of reading, though, should come with a sufficient rate of comprehension.

Who are you?

There is no point in reading fast if, in the end, you have no idea of what it is that you have read about.

It is possible to double or even triple your reading speed. But you might want to think about the benefits that you will gain from it.

Here are some situations wherein you can actually apply this skill, and the people who will benefit from the wonders of speed reading:

1. Students

As a high school or college student, you would have tons of written material to go through as you increase your level of education.

Speed reading comes in handy when you equate it with 90% comprehension, as the knowledge gained will help you in the course of the field that you have chosen.

The principles of having a photographic memory and visual stimulation, which most speed reading courses require, may be used to your benefit.

2. Businesspeople

As a clerk or an executive, you have tons of memos and material to go through everyday. Also, you have to read to keep up with the latest in the industry that you are involved in.

Speed reading will help you in this aspect, as it will allow you to remember and swiftly read over facts and documents which might be vital for your business.

3. People with reading disabilities

About 10 to 15 percent of all children have a reading disability. This means that they read slower than what they are capable of mentally.

In these cases, the principles of speed reading may be applied to reduce or significantly improve their learning and comprehension.

4. People with attention-deficit disorder (ADD)

Speed reading actually forces one's mind to run through the page of a book with such speed that you would not have time to get bored. This is a great idea to apply for people with ADD, as their attention would not have time to wander.

In the end, speed reading is a skill to be applied only when necessary. Who would want to lounge on the beach and have to carry 10 books because you are just skimming through it? This would make you lose the pleasure that was meant to be derived from the author's written prose.

Just make sure that if you decide to pursue speed reading, you know the reason why you would want to apply this skill. Also, have a specific idea of what "reading" actually means to you.

Is Speed Reading a Genetic Ability or a Learned Skill?

First Steps in Becoming a Speed Reader

Most of us learned to read through letter-by-letter recognition. As we grow older, we learn to read words as a group, then phrases. This is the same concept that is applied to speed reading.

Some people may think of speed reading as a genetic ability or a magic trick, but it is actually a skill which people can develop through practice. It is all a matter of acquiring a larger piece of information every time you make a sweep at the text and learning to process this chunk quickly in your brain. A normal reader will read around 200-250 words per minute, some speed readers claim that they read up 10,000 words per minute. That is equivalent to reading 80 pages of text per minute.

Reading faster, without compromising comprehension, will always give someone a competitive advantage in the field of education and perhaps in business as well.

Always in Context

Speed reading should always be put in the context of what you would want to look for in a certain text. Before you read something, ask yourself first, "what am I looking for?" Then, having this in mind, read through the article, dissecting the chunks of information and extracting the information that is pertinent to you.

An effective reader reads more words in one sweep of the eye and seldom skips a chunk of word. This allows fluidity in the reading process and a consistent outline is formed.

On the other hand, the poor reader spends much time in reading a fewer number of words in one chunk. They often skip words or chunks of words and this causes them to lose their reading flow.

The irregularity in their eye movement will also make reading a tiring activity. They would see reading as a chore and would dislike it.

Eye Movement

Speed reading involves refocusing the movement of the eye to be able to extract more information at one glance. Sentences are dissected into multiple blocks of information and these are swept by the eyes. The larger the number of words in each chunk, the faster the reading becomes.

Word Chunks

Speed reading involves increasing the number of words read in each word chunk. An effective reader would divide a text into chunks of words and read the chunks one after another and does not read the text word-per-word. The more words you can put in one chunk, the better and faster reader you will be.

The amount of time being used in reading a chunk of words is also crucial in speed reading. It basically aims at reducing the time spent in reading each chunk. Again, this all boils down to practice and devotion.

Re-reading

Re-reading phrases or words is a big factor which slows your reading pace. Reading is all about comprehension, and sometimes, people reread words which are unnecessary. The more often you go back, the slower your reading becomes.

Speed Reading Practice Technique

Improving your reading speed requires practice and lots of it. One way of developing your skill as a reader is to try new ways of helping your reading process.

One of which is to employ a guide while you read. You can try placing your hand or a ruler on the page you are reading and by keeping a

steady motion as you read. Keep your hand-eye coordination and try to make a single sweep at the pages. As you become more accustomed to this kind of technique, you can try to move your hand and eyes faster. Make your hand set the pace to try to improve your reading speed.

You should try to gradually increase the number of words that you can read in a single sweep and reduce the amount of time that you use in reading each chunk. You should also avoid rereading words or going back to certain phrases.

Speed reading is a skill which is developed through devoted practice. No one becomes a speed reader over night. We may not be able to read 80 pages of text per minute but striving to improve our reading speed will be very beneficial to us. We may not be speed readers, but we can be effective readers with speed.

How You Can Test Your Own Reading Speed

Can you finish a novel at one sitting? Can you go through an entire newspaper in an hour? Are you convinced that you're a hot shot reader? Or maybe you're one of those readers who read as slow as a snail.

There are ways to determine how fast you can read. The quickest way to find out your reading speed is to take one of those online reading tests. There are various websites on the net that offer these tests for free.

One of the easiest ways you can do this is to take one of those tests that time your speed as you read a sample text. You click a button that sets off the timer and then read at a normal rate.

Don't try to speed read as you're taking the test because you will not get an accurate result. It would also be important to note that most people read faster from books than they do on computer screens.

Once you're done reading, click the button that stops the timer. Instantly you will see the result.

Reading speed is measured by the number of words you can read per minute as we have already discussed. The average reading speed clocks in at approximately 250 words per minute. Your reading speed can be determined by comparing against this average reading speed rate.

In addition to testing your reading speed, some websites also offer to test your memory and comprehension level. A person who is taking a test is asked to read a sample text. Afterwards he or she will be asked questions pertaining to the material that they've just read; but the thing is that they are not allowed to look back at the text to check for answers. Their score is assessed based on their response to these questions.

Speed reading may allow you to read a text at an increased speed, but the problem with this is that your comprehension level suffers.

Your ability to absorb information and remember details decrease when you employ the method of speed reading. To get an accurate assessment, read the sample text at a normal pace.

It is one thing to be able to read fast, but to actually absorb and comprehend the information that you are receiving is another matter. Comprehension level that falls below 50% is considered to be poor by reading experts. This is the rate that you normally achieve when you're speed reading.

Speed reading is a method of reading that allows you to read at an accelerated pace, way above the average rate. This is done by mostly skimming the material you are reading.

Speed readers don't read text word by word, rather they skim through the whole text and try to extract the essence of the material. The problem with this method is that the reader's comprehension level usually suffers greatly. Making it extremely difficult to learn and study new material.

There are a lot of factors that determines an individual's reading speed such as:

1. At what age did a person begin to read?
2. A person's level of focus and concentration while they are reading.
3. How a person was taught to read also plays a significant part in determining how fast he or she would be able to read.
4. The kind of material a person is reading is also important. Some reading materials are more complex than others.
5. The amount of subvocalization a person is doing while reading also affects their reading speed.

We know that subvocalization is when you read the words out loud in your head. Some actually mouth the words, albeit silently. Proponents of speed reading discourage subvocalization. They

believe that this method of reading actually slows down a person's reading speed.

But other sources claim that subvocalization is conducive to learning. In fact, they believe that this is the way we effectively absorb information and understand the material we are reading. This doesn't mean though that if you don't subvocalize you will not comprehend the material you are reading.

Many people have spent a lot of money on books and seminars devoted to speed reading. But many reading experts claim that an accelerated reading speed is quite useless without comprehension. Knowing your own reading speed will allow you to discover if you need to work on improving your reading speed. This is why it would be beneficial for anyone to take these reading tests.

How to Test and Time Yourself

Let's take a look at another method for testing and timing your own reading skills. Before we do, let's conduct a brief review.

Reading has been an integral part of human lifestyle since the birth of the alphabets. People basically read everyday, and will continue to do so for as long as they know how to. It can be generalized then that reading is a daily, inescapable task, regardless of social status, gender, work and cultural affiliations. But inescapable as it may be, not all people can read efficiently and fast enough. Minority of the population comprises the efficient ones, with their level as much as five times greater than common readers.

Certain factors made this phenomenon possible. For one, some people give little attention to their reading speed. Amidst the fact that they want to improve, there still is the conception that nothing much can be done about it.

Secondly, most people do not regard improvement of reading as something that can compensate as much as improving on other human skills. Most people prefer taking proficiency courses in typing than reading.

Also, reading involves characteristics and habits that have been acquired by the person since he started to read. These aspects are hard to manipulate through normal means. Efforts have to be exerted to correct years of wrong habits.

These habits include oral analysis of the read texts which limits the processing of the information to about 150 words, eye movements and focus which limits the number of words we read based on what we see in an instance, going back on parts of the text more often than necessary, poor concentration which leads to longer reading time, vocabulary deficiency which affects understanding of the texts, efforts to recall everything which makes reading heavy, and lack of interest in reading that makes the task more difficult.

These notions may very well be related to lack of precise information about reading and self-evaluation of reading habits. This evaluation can be done by taking a comprehensive speed test to gauge not just how fast a person reads, but also the level of comprehension that he employs in reading.

Okay, let's move on to this alternative method of testing. So, how is this speed test conducted?

Step 1. Choose two good reading materials.

A page for each of the reading materials will do the job. The chosen materials should not be too simple or too complex to be understood. Count the number of words on each line and take note of the figure acquired. Then, count the number of lines in the page selected. Again, take note of the result.

Step 2. Have someone read the texts prior to the test.

Ask the person to list questions. The answers must of course come from the article. This will come in handy after the speed test.

Step 3. Do the pre-test.

At this stage, read the first selected material without getting the time needed to finish the article. Focus on the difficulties that made reading slower and harder for you. List these things after reading the whole text.

Step 4. Get a timer.

Start reading the second text. Take note of the time needed to finish the whole page.

Step 5. Answer the questionnaire.

Step 6. Calculate.

To know the reading speed (expressed as words per minute or wpm), multiply the two figures acquired from step 1. This value denotes the total number of words read. Divide this figure by the time (in minutes) needed to finish reading the text.

The quotient determines the reading speed.

The comprehension rate can be calculated by dividing the number of correct answers by the number of questions provided. The number acquired, when multiplied to 100, will yield the comprehension percentage.

Step 7. Evaluate.

Common readers have reading rates approximated to 200 words per minute, with considerable comprehension rate. Efficient readers, on the other hand, can read up to 1000 words per minute with a high comprehension rate.

As we discussed in the previous chapter, one may also avoid going through all the steps listed above by looking for websites that offer interactive methods of determining your reading speed. Take note, however, that the results obtained from the sites vary from one another because of the various methods employed.

Additionally, remember that some consider reading online is slower than reading physical content.

By taking the simple step of knowing your reading speed, you become closer to the promises that efficient reading can bring. By knowing and understanding your reading characteristics, you can determine the right affectivity course to suit your needs.

Test Yourself to Determine Your Retention

We've discussed testing yourself to determine your reading speed but just briefly touched upon comprehension.

What is the use of being able to read 10,000 words per minute if you do not even remember an idea or two about it once you are done?

Being able to absorb written material and gain knowledge from it in a small amount of time is a skill that can benefit you, as an individual, and even the company that you work for.

We have determined that the average person can read about 250 to 300 words per minute.

In order for you to surpass an average person's reading skills, first, you need to further explore the reasons behind "slow reading":

- Focusing your eyes on one single point while reading.
- Reading the text "aloud" in your mind (there's that subvocalization again).
- Having to go back and re-read a particular sentence, phrase or paragraph when your concentration wanders.

Now that you already know the mannerisms or bad habits that contribute to your average reading skills, here are some tips on how you can speed them up:

1. Know what you want from the written material that you are reading.

If you are a student studying for an exam, focus on the key points which you think will most likely be asked.

If you are an employee reading through a report, skim over the details and focus on the important points. Learn to recognize the useful facts from what you can actually ignore so that you can sift through the more relevant information.

Knowing exactly what you want to gain from the material that you are reading through will help you extract the important facts and throw away not-so-essential details.

2. Take in more words as you read through the material.

Practice is the key to speed reading. Do not force yourself to read through an entire chapter in one sitting.

Take one step at a time. Group the words into blocks. As you practice, try to increase the number of words included in one block and you will see yourself improving.

Still, do not sacrifice your retention while developing your speed reading skills. After reading through an entire document, try to test yourself and see what you remember about the material. Better yet, make a "mental summary" of the things that you have learned after reading.

3. Focus more on what you are reading to avoid "regression."

Regression is when your attention unconsciously lags and you have to skip back and re-read the words or sentences that you have already gone through.

To avoid this, try to use your finger or a pencil as you read through the text of a book. When reading from a computer, use the pointer of the mouse or the text icon to move forward through the words displayed on your screen.

This way, your eyes will have something visible to follow and give a more thorough "flow" to your reading. Remember to always move forward, rather than wasting your time having to skip back and re-read something that you have missed. With this, you will see your reading skills improve in no time.

4. Study more to gain more.

To further improve your reading skills, there are speed reading courses or seminars that you can attend.

You might like to use some of those online self-tests that we discussed. In fact, checking these free tests out first will let you know whether you really want to go and further enhance your reading skills and determine your retention. This is a good measure for deciding if the expense involved in commercial courses is justifiable for your needs.

It is important to track your progress.

10 Reasons for Improving Your Reading Speed

The invention of television has resulted to more people turning to the idiot box for their education and entertainment needs. The proliferation of home movies has discouraged more and more people from reading. Despite this, reading remains a very important factor in the acquisition of knowledge.

While watching and listening to audio and video programs continue to influence people from all walks of life, it cannot be denied that reading remains an important aspect of one's daily life. Believe it or not, an adult spends at least an hour a day for reading. Everybody is faced with the task of reading something, from the morning newspapers, to one's phone or power bills, to memos in the office or letters that are sent through snail mail or through emails.

Despite constant practice in reading books, newspapers, computer articles and other reading materials, it is sad to note that the average reader only has a reading speed of 200 to 300 words per minute, with a comprehension rate of 50 to 60 percent. Experts attribute this to numerous reading problems.

While others have a problem with subvocalization (which means reading the words internally or mentally), some people have the opposite problem of reading the words aloud. Both cause a delay in reading because the readers still has to wait for the word to be heard, either mentally or through the ears, before he comprehends the word.

Re-reading is also one of the common problems that hinder fast reading. This means that the reader reads a word or group of words more than once.

The problem with faulty fixations is also a common problem that delays reading speed. A reader with fixation problem has a tendency to stare at a word longer before proceeding to the next series of words. While those with fixation problems tend to linger at a word, those with concentration problems could not concentrate on what is being read.

Reading is a skill that relies on the coordination between the mind and the eyes. Just like a person's skill in walking, one's reading skill can be improved through several methods. If you want to improve your reading skills, then you must set your goals and target. First, take a speed reading test, and then determine your comprehension rate. To get your reading efficiency rate, multiply your reading speed and your comprehension rate. Goal setting allows you to focus on what you want to achieve, where you are and where you want to go.

To develop faster reading skills, you must first know the purpose of your reading. A leisurely reading of a book or a magazine need not be under time pressure but people usually read lifestyle article faster than serious and technical books.

Since serious books require serious reading, you must first familiarize yourself with the reading material. Check for blurbs or summaries at the back of the book as this may give you a general view of what the book is all about. It will also do you good to check out one or two reviews about the book, the number of chapters and pages and whether or not the author used pictures or diagrams, for easy reading and comprehension.

But why do you have to go through all this just so you can increase your reading speed? What's in it for you? In other words, what is the motivation for speed reading?

1. Speed reading makes reading more fun and less cumbersome. If you can read fast, then you can instantly get to the point that the author is getting to.
2. Learn new things at lesser amount of time. One of the motivations behind reading is one's thirst for knowledge. With speed reading, you will be able to explore new horizons in a short span of time.
3. Higher grades for students of whatever level. Students usually get more reading materials as they are required to submit reviews, papers and other assignments almost everyday. An increased reading speed will not only mean lesser time for

doing assignments. It will also enable the students to have a more enjoyable educational experience.

4. Efficient job performance. Office workers usually get their share of reading materials from emails, reports and other office correspondence. A worker who can read faster will be able to finish his job on time. This means he can do more work, or he can spend more time for rest or personal improvement activities.
5. Spend extra time for other activities. With a faster reading speed, you will be able to finish reading your assignments, reports and letters faster. With this, you will have more time for housework, sports, or any activity you have in mind.
6. Increase competence in other aspects. A fast reader would be able to absorb reading materials faster, thus enabling him to grasp new ideas faster.
7. Increase in confidence and self esteem. An increased reading speed can result to more self confidence because you know you are able to accomplish something which other people have trouble doing. Being ahead of the pack will improve your self esteem.
8. Better comprehension. Others believe that the faster you read, the lesser you understand. This is not true because studies have linked faster reading rate with increased comprehension. Being able to read word groups means being able to understand its contextual meaning.
9. Diversified knowledge. If you read fast, you can read other documents at lesser time. This means you will be able to get a variety of information in a short span of time. This will give you diversified knowledge.
10. Improvement in one's finances. If you can read faster than the ordinary guy, then you can finish your reading necessities in a short time. Thus, you will have more time to spend improving

your financial status by reading how to books, business strategies and the likes.

About "Speed Reading" Books and Classes

The importance of speed-reading classes

Have you read a book without knowing what it is all about? Do you read word for word and utter the words as you read them? Do you have a reading speed of less than 250 words per minute? If so, you are considered a less efficient reader.

Less efficient readers re-read words or go back to the word they have just read and linger, instead of reading on. They have poor vocabulary and use vocalization instead of visualization.

If you are a slow or less efficient reader, then don't despair because there is hope for you. At the risk of sounding repetitive reading is a skill which can be improved with practice and the right reading tools and techniques.

Less efficient readers who have the proper motivation can be good readers by finding the proper solution. They can buy self-help books on speed reading, or attend speed reading classes.

Speed reading classes are available for everyone, from children to adults alike. While adults who want to learn speed reading can benefit from speed reading classes, the ideal students for such classes are children eight to twelve years old.

Children under this age bracket are natural speed readers. Speed reading classes have proven to be effective, when conducted for as short as one month, depending on the tools and techniques offered by schools offering them. However, there are adults and children who learn speed-reading in a shorter span of time.

But why attend speed reading classes? Speed reading comes in handy in a lot of situations. Someone who knows how to read fast and comprehend quickly can save time and accumulate vast and diversified information in a short time.

Those who attend speed reading classes also claim they have not only gained the tools and techniques to read fast, but have improved their memory, developed their potentials, and increased their productivity.

So what does one need to be able to join a speed reading class? Aside from the financial ability to purchase the course, you must start with a good vocabulary and comprehension skills.

You must also be a good reader already because no amount of speed reading classes can teach one how to read. Forget the age requirement because anybody who can read can join speed reading classes.

Speed reading classes teach students techniques in speed reading such as proper skimming and scanning of words in a book or any reading material and eye and mental coordination. In speed reading classes, students are asked to try speed reading for a specific time and are then asked to report to their teachers the things they have retained or recalled from his reading.

But speed reading is not magic; it is not learned at the click of a finger. One has to sweat (not literally of course) to learn how to read fast.

Students attending speed reading classes got through the first stage of just going through the motion of speed reading without understanding anything. However, after the techniques have been learned, students finally understand the drills and the speed reading skills being taught. After a while, students begin to integrate what they have learned in speed reading classes, and are actually able to do speed reading.

Speed reading classes do not just teach students speed reading techniques. They teach the students how to read non-fiction books by getting an overview of the subject matter and how to do effective note taking. Also included in the course are techniques on reading fiction such as how to identify the important elements in a story.

At the first stage of speed reading classes, students are asked to measure their reading efficiency rates by getting the number of words they can read per minute and multiplying this by their comprehension rate.

Students are also informed of bad reading habits so they are aware of what they have to lose, in order to gain. Among the identified bad reading habits include poor use of visualization techniques, subvocalization, the use of improper lighting and posture when reading.

Those who have attended speed reading classes are expected to minimize reading of words aloud, minimize subvocalization, increase their skills in skimming and scanning words and phrases and improve their vocabulary.

What Happens to Your Eyes While You are Reading?

How reading affects your eyes

Daniel, a researcher, usually spends eight straight hours on the computer, researching and surfing the Internet for interesting topics. He even eats in front of the computer. When not at work, he is still in front of the computer, either watching movies or reading his favorite book online. At the end of the day, he is not only teary-eyed, but is seeing blurs in his surroundings.

If you spend most of your time reading, or like Daniel, you spend your hours staring at that irresistible computer screen, you have to take very important care of your eyes.

The eyes are not only the windows to your soul. It is also an organ which helps you read, take in data and interpret that data. Your eyes work like a camera, enabling the images you see around you to pass through the cornea and the lens of the eyes, and then focus directly on the retina, which send images to your brain.

So how does your eye work when you are reading? When reading from a book or a screen, your eyes follow the printed page and then the words and phrases listed before you. Ordinary reading, meaning reading from a book or magazine, is already causing pressure on your eyes. Technological advancement, though helpful, is also taking its toll on your eyes.

Among the activities that cause eye problems include but are not limited to sports, computer work, reading, watching television and playing video games for longer periods of time.

If you are exposed to these kinds of activities, then you must learn how to take care of your tired eyes, by taking time off to look into the distance, taking short breaks for a walk to rest your eyes, and making a conscious effort to blink.

Several eye problems that may have been caused by reading errors have been identified by doctors and you should be aware of them,

and check if you are already suffering from any of these eye problems.

While Nearsightedness is a common eye problem that causes far away object from getting blurry, farsightedness is the opposite as it causes close objects to appear blurry. Both problems are present in astigmatism, which causes one to see distorted images of things, thereby making near and far objects blurry. Such problems are however easily corrected and treated by prescription eyeglasses, contact lenses, or laser treatments.

Proper care of your eyes is important because eye defects can sometimes cause poor learning or reading habits. Take the case of people who are called idiots or dumb, just because they have difficulty in reading, and in comprehending what they are reading. Developmental optometrists say these people are not really dumb, but most often than not, they have vision problems which can be easily corrected by therapy.

Some people who have these problems even have 20/20 vision. Optometrists however say you should not be fooled by this measurement because one can have a perfect vision range and still suffer from vision defects.

Most parents of children diagnosed with learning and reading problems are sure that their kids are just plain slow learners. However, developments in optometry may just prove them wrong. Developmental optometrists say these children may just have eye problems.

If you or anyone you know, especially children, have learning or reading problems, check for the following signs: changing the position of letters in words, complaining of reading tiredness, skipping lines in a paragraph, reversing the order of words when reading aloud and re-reading words. If these signs are present, then consult a developmental optometrist to correct the eye problem.

Like speed reading, experts say, vision is a skill which can be learned. To be a proficient reader, you must have both---good

eyesight which is the ability to see; and a good vision, which is the ability to make meaning of what you see.

The way you move your eyes shows how you are processing the information you are being given. Like when you enter into a room full of people, your eyes have a tendency to blink faster which shows whether or not you are nervous.

Remember those times when your mom scolded you for reading with a low light? Mom may just have a point because it is a fact that reading in low light makes your pupil bigger and as it gets bigger, the blur gets greater, signaling the eyes to grow longer and thus become more nearsighted.

To make sure your eyes are preserved so you can continue reading or watching your favorite movies, always have an eye and physical check up at least once or twice a year.

What Role do Your Hands Play in Reading?

How the Hands Help Reading Comprehension

The hands prompt the mind into a more active state. From a book "The Hand" written by Frank Wilson, the author stated that the human brain was shaped by the hands and evolution itself. He stated that reading manually is different from reading from a computer. In 2000 the Ohio State University educators conducted a study about the difference between reading on books and reading on a computer monitor. Studies show that students from different levels find it harder to comprehend the information provided by the computer screen. As reported by the American Libraries, the information is not as interesting and persuasive than that of reading the same information, like essays, stories or articles on paper or books.

Gestures are the first stimulus that was developed using the body's hand and limbs in the upper part. Toddlers begin their learning once they see things that arouse their interests. As soon as something has stimulated their minds, they discover more with the use of their hands. Touching, feeling and holding the thing involved embeds more information in the brain. Slowly and surely the brain adapts and begins to develop together it disciplines the hands to move with control.

Normal reading with the aid of the hand began in the millions of years ago. Primitives carve images on the stone walls to reflect their thoughts and directions for the next generation. The eyes read these images with the hands touching the symbols along the way. It helps the readers understand the context of the message more than by just looking at the set of carved symbols. These developments have been passed from generation to generation by human intelligence. The only transition that happens is that the mode of reading change with technology.

Page manipulation of the book or magazine by slowly turning the paper with fingers at the start of the reading conveys patterns of different concepts to the mind. Fingers glide with the words and this subconsciously stimulates comprehension. The explanation here is

that when the hands and fingers help in reading, the mind recalls the location of specific information physically.

People can easily remember where they read it just because their hands have guided them through the reading process. It does not entirely have to be fingers pointing each word but the mere fact of holding the reading material and the place where the hand was placed gives an instant cue for the information registered.

Wilson mentioned that people do not give special attention to the importance of dexterity in learning. This is a case of people being so cephalocentric. Malcolm Gladwell who wrote the "The Social Life of Paper," described handling physical means of communication is not only beneficial for acquiring information but also has its social function.

This indicates that the hands play very important role in reading. Reading is not only derived from paper. This can be in a form of hand gestures and other signs. A traffic enforcer for example may send a message with the use of his hands. People find it more inviting to hold a brochure or pamphlet with a series of instructions or steps rather than just read the same information from a posted reading on the wall or a TV monitor. Not only there is retention but also a sense of security to avoid committing mistakes.

Concepts are grasped when the information being transmitted is aided with the hands when reading. Hands provide placement for emotion when there is a sudden impulse of getting very important information when reading. It could be that the person might even point to words that are given emphasis, thus making the reader surer that he has acquired the information because of his reaction.

People say that reading while holding the book, paper, magazine or anything in particular gives them a more established feeling of a more solid fact. It also gives them the feeling of being close to the writer and knowing them personally. This is not the same feeling they get when they read a story from a far or even from just the monitor. Reading communication embodied to a book or paper is itself a more rewarding experience because hands mirror the concepts to the brain.

Fiction vs. Non-fiction - Is there a Difference?

The function of reading in people has really been taken for granted. Humans are the only known species on the face of the planet to extensively use symbols to convey a message. In addition, humans seem to be the only species bent on improving his communications by any means possible.

Human beings are social animals and therefore communication plays a great role in the mental and social well being of the individual. We find various ways to communicate, through voice, gestures, pictures and through symbols we use to associate with the subject in question.

Reading is a process of retrieving and comprehending information previously stored in the mind using symbols that point to the information. When we read, we are learning from the experience of other people. Reading can also be a form of entertainment, a temporary escape from reality where daily concerns are forgotten temporarily.

As such, reading can be broadly classified as fiction and non-fiction.

Fiction is mostly the product of a person's ability to imagine and create situations in his mind. Interspersed with a person's real life experiences, fiction can actually be made realistic to its readers. It is more of an ability to tell a story that fiction is well-known for.

When it comes to entertainment or art, fiction stands foremost in the minds of many. This is because fiction mostly contains elements of appealing to emotion. Fiction distracts us from our daily routine, inspires us to look at things with a different perspective, makes us laugh with mirth, cry in despair, and empathize without having any real attachments.

Examples of fiction include myth, fables, fairy tales, novels, comics, some specialized magazines and newsletters, fan fiction, role playing games, accounting ledgers most businesses show to the Internal

Revenue Service (IRS) and most unconfirmed literature on the internet.

Non-fiction writing is the attempt for writers to explain reality as it is. It is a representation, an account of facts. Accuracy, simplicity, and ease of comprehension are the issue when it comes to reading non-fictional articles.

Non-fiction works are more concerned with its target audience as well since its primary role is to inform. The legitimacy of a statement is more closely scrutinized and the passing off of fiction as fact is subject to possible legal proceedings if caught.

Examples of non-fiction works are more numerous. These include journals, essays, biographies, autobiographies, documentaries, encyclopedias, scientific papers, dictionaries, thesauri, manuals, guides, general newspapers, magazines, textbooks, technical treatises, white papers, how-to books, articles, some specialized websites, and most hidden accounting ledgers of legitimate (and illegitimate) businesses.

Fictional works emphasize and work on the reader's imagination. It is the fictional writer's objective to entertain and to suspend belief more than inform. For the non-fictional writer, his aim is to inform first and to entertain second.

It is important to note that both kinds of literature still make use of creativity, imagination and facts to convey information to its readership.

Furthermore, it is usually easy for a reader to enter the flow of a fictional work. Fiction has appeal to the senses as well as beyond it. Barring preference of subject matter or author, the reader expects to be entertained. So most fictional writers have creative license to make the subject as interesting as possible.

Fictional works mostly follow a general theme as well. These works usually have a protagonist, an antagonist, a plot with some conflict mixed in. Scenes, settings and themes establish the flavor of the

story. The story follows a path that either leads to a resolution of the conflict by climax, or not.

Fiction also has genres as well. Science fiction, historical fiction, romance, westerns, war, fantasy, high fantasy, cyberpunk, cultural, mythical, epics, and such are some examples.

Non-fiction writers are more restricted, but nevertheless recent informative works have taken a page from fiction writers in an attempt to make non-fiction works more palatable by entertaining and informing in equal measure. Of course not all non-fictional works are required to be entertaining, making sense in accounting ledgers is still paramount.

The author's reputation as well is important to consider when making a decision to read a non-fictional work. This is because people would like to know if the author really knows what he is talking about. Non-fictional writers are more believable when they have the credentials to back up their works like long years of service, doctorate degrees, etc.

People are less credential-conscious of fictional writers. Since their goal is to be entertained, the audience values these authors in their ability to suspend belief, and more.

Speed Reading and How We Vocalize

It has been told that the volume of information we receive in our time increases exponentially almost everyday. This is true since it is a compound-interest type of calculation.

For every article written by an author, a few hundred people will read it and most likely disseminate it in one form or another to the rest of his distribution list of friends, family, office mates, etc. Information travels at the speed of thought.

For every click of the mouse and keystroke on the keyboard, we're transmitting and receiving information. A large majority of the information we receive through our senses is visual. We read more than we speak. This is closely followed by our hearing and the rest of our senses.

Toffler posited a few decades back that humanity is in its Information Age. He states that this is the time when the mind is most used to get ahead in today's life. However, there is a problem with information. There's just too much information for the mind to process all at once. This overload of information to the human senses is coined by Toffler as future shock.

Humanity has devised ways to cope with the large influx of data. He created systems of managing information like ledgers, filing systems, databases and libraries. He made machines that crunch numbers for him like the calculator, computer, cash register, etc. He enlisted other people to specialize in a branch of information like librarians, database programmers, encoders, etc.

However, the capacity of the individual to receive information has remained more or less the same. Biology left alone can only move at Mother Nature's pace. This has led to efforts in the scientific community to find ways to increase memory retention and comprehension in individuals. Research by the US government and universities led to the practice of rapid reading methods like speed reading.

Speed reading is a method of reading that emphasizes quickly skimming through the passages of literature while retaining comprehension of the subject matter. At normal speeds, we read with a high enough comprehension level at 75%. Speed reading claims to be able to increase the reading speed up to about 1,000 words per minute, though some claim comprehension rate is about 50%.

There are numerous types and techniques of speed reading. As side from reading quickly, students of speed reading are asked to breathe from the diaphragm, relax, and adopt a mental state that takes in all he is reading.

Here is still another method of speed reading developed by a school teacher named Evelyn Wood. The “Wood Method” makes use of the hand as a pacing and focusing device. The eye would remain focused on the word where the hand is placed. Speeds of up to a thousand words a minute were claimed to have been reached with full comprehension.

Scientific studies of speed reading have shown that asking people to read at a faster pace will only increase comprehension to a limited degree. The ideal reading speed recommended by the scientific community that maximizes comprehension is at 200 to 350 words per minute, far below the 1,000 words per minute mark of speed readers.

One major hindrance claimed by advocates of speed reading is the natural ability to humans to vocalize text. Termed as subvocalization, it is the internal or subvocalized speech made when reading. It is a comprehension aid as humans imagine the way words sound as they read through text.

Subvocalization reduces the load of work placed on the cognitive functions of the brain, and gives access to other meanings to a given subject. This is a natural process in humans and attempts to reduce subvocalization in studies resulted in an impaired ability to learn and comprehend.

It is actually impossible for a human to totally stop subvocalization. Biologically, words seen are associated with the way words sound. This neurological memory aid makes sure that we retrieve information

faster as well as remember words more swiftly. At any rate, subvocalization only slows down reading when it involves movement of the throat, mouth and jaw.

Furthermore, a person's educational level, level of language fluency, eyesight, and general mental state has to be taken into account. Any impairment mentioned above severely affects the ability of the person to comprehend reading even at lower speeds.

How to Increase Your Reading Speed

Read at the speed of thought

The Information Age is a time when speed is of the essence. Everything is fast. In the blink of an eye, money is transferred from New York to Tokyo. A call on a mobile phone is made in the same distance in the same amount of time.

It is no big leap of thought to see that even people will be expected to move at light speeds. The constant rapid pace of life in cities is not something most people like, but will want to be able to cope with to keep their heads above water.

So picture yourself. You work in one of the biggest Information Technology corporations in the United States. Your job as project manager is to coordinate project movements between your end in the US and an outsource firm in India. Your primary methods of communication are the phone and email, and the occasional monthly visits you make to Bangalore to meet the point people face to face.

On top of all this, you must report your progress to your employer, get his opinion, work with middle management under you to keep things from going into meltdown, and then make sure all things administrative are done. And let's not forget the "informal" socials. It's a task of exponential proportions if you don't know what you're doing.

You need to save time, and for you time is a valuable resource. Verbal communication can be managed and you can get to the point. Email is manageable. You can always ask people to get to paraphrase and supply bullet points. But what about your professional growth?

That usually stumps most people. Most project managers don't have the time to read long essays in an MBA course. But when it comes to research they have to do, they have to hunker down and hit the books which is a costly, time intensive endeavor.

One suggestion is to increase your reading speed. Reading faster saves you time. Here are a few suggestions that will help you increase your reading speed.

1. Do not fixate. If your eye lingers on a word, that is called a fixation. Try to focus on groups of word instead. You will soon find that groups of words make sense depending on your fluency of the language.

Do not get into the habit to backtracking or rereading. Text is usually constructed to summarize then move on to elaborate so there really isn't any necessity to backtrack. Also, develop a wider eye span that takes in a larger area of the page.

2. Improve your vocabulary. When you encounter something you do not know take the time with the material to understand what it is. Next time you encounter that word, you will not be slowed down by it.
3. Do not move your lips. Subvocalization is a natural human function. It is a neurological aid in which the brain associates the word in visual with the word as it sounds. However, your reading speed will be impaired if you have the habit of vocalizing it every time. If you find yourself moving your lips, try reading faster and rest your eyes on groups of words as instructed above.
4. Take time off to read something else. Get used to reading by reading other topics. The human mind is always looking for something fresh. Try to read a novel or other non-work related literature on weekends.
5. You must have a purpose. When you know what you're looking for, you will find that you can rapidly skim through topics you need and avoid topics that have no relevance to your search. This one point is a great time saver. Do not start reading unless you know what you need to know.
6. Practice. If you find that you have difficulty focusing on the text. Use your finger as the focus and pacing device. Rapidly move

your finger across the material to prevent fixation and increase your attention. This method was introduced by Evelyn Wood and it achieved speeds of 1000 words per minute with comprehension.

7. Pace yourself. If you find yourself getting tired, read for 5 to 10 minutes at a time and take rest periods in between. Gradually increase the reading duration according to your pace and taste.

How to Increase Your Comprehension

20% Speed 80% Comprehension

Comprehension is defined in Encarta as “the ability to grasp the meaning of something”.

One of the most complex things humans can do is read. Reading is a process that requires the recognition of a symbol or set of symbols, forming a pattern that point to another set of meanings previously learned and stored in the mind.

Being an ability found in humans and in limited levels in primates, literacy requires that one must be able to comprehend first the symbol and the underlying meaning behind the symbols. Since reading is this complex, it signals that a person is intelligent.

Comprehension then is vital to the mental and social standing of an individual. Increasing comprehension acts as a force multiplier. The more things a person is able to comprehend with the least amount of time and input has the greater advantage.

Even a slight edge in comprehension makes a significant difference over time. This slight edge acts as compound interest, pulling the person ahead more and more until he is ahead of the pack by a wide margin.

This concept is referred to as the Pareto Principle or the 80/20 Principle. It states that small initial advantages over time can increasingly multiply and produce highly unexpected results. This in turn makes it easier for people investing in skills like comprehension to become even more skilled over time.

The average human spends a significant amount of time learning through books written by various authors. People who read are essentially learning from the experience of others, saving time and effort.

Of course, the better method would be to directly learn from another experienced person, but not everybody has the time, money and patience for that. Reading, then, is a perfect alternative.

Speed reading would logically be a good way to learn more in less time, but some studies have shown that though a person trained in speed reading can consume literature at about 1,000 words per minute. However, the comprehension rate is at 50%, which is not acceptable to the development of better comprehension.

An average human reads at a speed of 200 words per minute with a comprehension rate of 75%. Though this is actually acceptable, any chance at improving this rate significantly creates a window opportunity for the person. Unfortunately, it would actually be easier for a person to learn to read faster than to learn to comprehend concepts better.

Despite this challenge, if the person wishes to have a better edge, it is recommended that he concentrate his efforts at attaining moderate reading speed and maximizing his level of comprehension instead.

Improved comprehension requires preparation and a willingness to improve. Here are a few tips to achieve the desired level of comprehension.

1. Practice self-assessment. Test the level of your comprehension through summarizing the material you just read. If you are able to explain concept in your own words, then you have understood the subject matter. As time passes this get easier.
2. Push the limits of comprehension. Through questionnaires, one's level of comprehension can be measured and test by oneself. Cross word puzzles, connecting the dots, etc. can be done in the comfort of one's own home without assistance.
3. Improve metacognition. Metacognition is the ability to "think about thinking." It is used as a regulation tool to catch oneself with thoughts that are not logical. It detaches a person from his own thoughts to see if they are biased. This is akin to the

teachings of Eastern philosophy where one is able to become brutally honest with himself.

4. Open your mind. Read extensively. Comprehension comes from an extensive learning background. Reading a lot about different subjects increases the likelihood of speedier comprehension in any other field due to the ability to spot similarities and differences.
5. Communicate. Find the time to speak with people of different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. People always have an opinion about something. While you may or may not agree with their opinions, there is always something to learn from their points of view.
6. Contemplate. Spend time to reflect on what you just read, turn the ideas upside down and inside out in your mind. The ability to turn an idea on its head will become more natural the more an idea is played around with this way.