

Increasing Your Reading Rate

Reading is something that takes a lot of our time – Between reading for classes, reading for fun and all the extra reading assignments for research projects and papers, there may be limited time for other extra-curricular activities. Increasing the speed of reading will help cut back on some of this time!

Different types of material read at different rates.

The average reader reads a:

Newspaper at 400-600 wpm
Literature/Stories at 300-400 wpm
Textbooks at 240-300 wpm

To establish a base reading rate, use the following process. This can be used for comparison to new techniques only.

- Pick out a book.
- Read for 3 minutes marking both the beginning and an ending place.
- Multiply # lines read by Avg. # words per line then divide by 3 to get the reading rate.

Two methods to help you increase reading rate:

The following two methods help people read more quickly by increasing the amount of information they can pick up with their eyes at one time. People who use these methods focus on reading groups of words, 3 or 4 at a time, instead of stopping their eye on each word in the sentence. By using peripheral vision and picking up 'chunks' of information rather than each word individually, individuals can significantly increase their reading rate.

Even Spacing: This technique is considered a guided version of the description above. By using a pencil, draw 3 or 4 columns, (depending on how wide the page is or how experienced the individual is), all the way down the page. Then, use these columns as a guide for which chunks of information your eye picks up.

Chunking (natural breaks): This technique will be very natural for some, but more difficult than the above for others. There are natural breaks in language that occur when you speak or read. Most of the time these breaks are only noticed by the subconscious. Instead of

breaking the 'chunks' up that you let your eyes focus on based upon a column format, some individuals are more comfortable with this use method. Take the following sentence as an example:

“English, like all other languages, is subject to that constant growth and decay that characterize all forms of life.”

Natural breaks in this sentence occur in several different parts. First, natural breaks usually occur around punctuation. Other parts could be after the word “constant”, after groups of words like “growth” and “decay”, even after the word “characterize”. People who can see these natural breaks while reading, can pick up the chunks of information between these breaks as one piece of information. After trying each of these methods, recheck your reading rate. Most individuals will find that one method works better for them than the other. It is important, when trying to use these methods, that comprehension is not sacrificed. For some, the methods may actually be slower and uncomfortable at first, but will they improve speed and accuracy with practice.

Practical uses of these techniques:

These techniques do not help with retention of material, they just aid in increasing the rate at which we read. They are great for looking through large quantities of information to decide whether or not it will be of use to you. They are also great for reading large amounts of material that must be completed in a short amount of time. After time, the method of choice will become natural and most who practice them simply read in this manner at all times.

Other Methods that Increase Reading Rates:

Skimming: Skimming is used to find sequence, main ideas, and for determining theory and concepts.

Scanning: Scanning is used to select specific information, to find the information you are looking for, or to find quotable material for research purposes.

Read more: Practice always increases your reading rate. Fifteen minutes a day of reading in an average size novel equals 18 books a year at an average reading rate.

To Make Reading Assignments More Effective:

- Read for purpose.
- Keep in mind the type of material you are reading.
- Be selective with what you read.
- Anticipate future questions over material while reading.
- Summarize ideas into your own words.
- Reduce the information read into what is important.
- Read chapter titles and think about subject matter first.
- Think about ideas, not just words.
- Use underlining, circling, marking, etc.
- Write down info at the same time you read it.
- Study over time. Cramming does not work for long-term retention.