The use of the tachistoscope in rapid recognition was developed by Dr. Samuel Renshaw at the Ohio State University. When the armed services realized the need for speed-up training in the aircraft recognition, Army and Navy pilots used the tachistoscope with successful results. Dr. Renshaw is one of our most prominent leaders in experimentation with visual problems and has tested the tachistoscope widely for reading benefits.

The tachistoscope helps the reader approach his limit of precision of vision and peripheral span. The untrained eye has a limited field of vision but with training on quick recognition this field of functional recognition expands.

The tachistoscope has other values. It provides training in several visual processes simultaneously. Not only does it increase the eye span, it also decreases the length of eye fixation. The shutter of the Flashmeter can be controlled so that an interval as short as 1/100 of a second can be obtained. For purposes of training in the Reading Laboratory 1/100 second gives enough speed to provide practice in quickening the eye fixation, since the shortest recorded fixation during reading is several times as long as 1/100 second.

Another value of the tachistoscope is that it forces the reader to grasp material as a form-field, seen as a whole. With such a quick flash he cannot vocalize or get side-tracked on elements of the visual pattern; he must take it in at once or it is gone as soon as the afterimage fades…

*Source: How to Read Better and Faster, New Fourth Edition, by Norman Lewis*