

# The Ultimate Guide to Destroy GRE Reading Comprehension

## **57 Tips, Strategies and Speed Reading Techniques to Ace the Most Difficult Section on the GRE**

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### CHAPTER 1

# Introduction to Reading Comprehension

*“When trying to improve your GRE score, an important question you need to consider is why the Reading Comprehension section is so important?”*

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Remember the time you were so excited to read an article about Cardiovascular Cartography?

Me neither.

What about Phytoplankton Diversity?

Or Fancelli’s famous sculpture Statua di Vulcano?

No?

Okay. Maybe a story of Cantor’s hierarchy of infinities, or research on the remnants of Neanderthals, or an excerpt from a book by Solzhenitsyn about the Soviet forced labour camp system during the late 1920s?

Alright, we get it.

You hate these things with all your heart, and you’re literally pulling your hairs out already.

But think about it. The only way you get to attend grad school, is by writing a test where you not only have to read things like these, but also understand, and analyze them thoroughly.

We know. It looks like an uphill task. It sounds boring. It completely drains your brain. And at the end of the day, it seems pointless.

But what if, you can turn something so esoteric into something that you really love to do?

Something so destructive to something you can destroy by yourself? That is what you are going to do.

This guide is an ultimate reference for you to ace Reading Comprehension on the GRE, and bolster your Verbal score even further.

Before we move on to the question types and strategies, it is important to know why the Reading Comprehension section is important for you. If you run the numbers, you'll notice that of a total of 40 questions on the two verbal sections you will face on test day, around 20 are from Reading Comprehension.

Now there's two ways to look at this. You can either say 'No, this is a disaster!', or 'Wow. This means I can have 20 points in my bag already. Cool!' If you're the latter type, this article is for you. Now together, let's destroy the most dreadful question type on the GRE.

## **What's the Reading Comprehension section all about?**

The test makers often purposefully fill the passages with jargon and complex vocabulary. For an untrained test taker, it would take a lot of time to comprehend such passages. Because we usually read essays to retain information and details, while on the GRE, reading that way will get you bogged down and confused with unnecessary information. So you have to learn how to read to ace the GRE.

On the GRE, you can expect about five passages per section and these passages will have 1-5 questions each, for a total of ten Reading Comprehension questions per section. These passages will vary from 1 – 5 paragraphs in length.

Now, where do they get these passages from? The GRE passages can be academic or non-academic and are drawn from books, magazines, biographies, work of literature, scholarly journals and text books. The topics include social science, natural science, humanities, arts, politics and everyday life issues, too. The passages mimic the material you'll be reading in grad school, with advanced vocabulary, complex sentence structure, and complicated ideas.

There are 3 types of questions you'll have to answer on the reading comprehension:

- **Multiple-choice Questions; Choose 1 answer:** These are your average, multiple choice questions with 5 answer choices out of which you must select ONLY ONE answer choice. You should read all the answer choices before selecting any choice.
- **Multiple-choice Questions; Choose 1 or more answers:** Here, you'll have 3 answer choices, and you'll have to choose every correct answer, which

could be one, two or all three of them. No partial credit is awarded, either! Keep in mind that these answer choices need to be evaluated separately.

- **Select-in-Passage:** This is a totally new sub question type, unique to the GRE. You'll have to click on a sentence in the passage that answers the question.

So far so good. Now, let's take a look at an example sentence extracted from the Official Guide:

"I enjoyed 'A Dream of Light and Shadow: Portraits of Latin American Women Writers' for the same reasons that, as a child, I avidly consumed women's biographies: the fascination with how the biographical details of another female's life are represented and interpreted."

Does this sound super difficult to comprehend? Are you stuck? Well, this is just one single sentence and there will be many sentences like this in a single passage, on the test.

The real challenge for you will be to read the sentences quickly and yet understand the passage structure and process the information in them so you will be able to answer the questions that follow. Remember, you are not reading the passage to know about the biographical details of a woman's life or how Galileo invented the telescope. You are reading the passage only to answer the questions and once you have answered the questions, you don't have to remember any part of the passage. So, avoid reading to retain the information.

## Components of a Passage:

The GRE passages are organized in many different ways. Some passages introduce the problem and then explain the author's solution for that problem. Some passages ask a question and answer it later in the passage. Some passages criticize an old hypothesis and introduce a new one. Do you see a pattern here? Well, most of the passages that show up on your test will be made up of certain building blocks. By knowing and scouting for these blocks in a passage, you can more easily follow the meaning and structure of the passage.

Most passages have four possible building blocks:

- The Point
- Background
- Support
- Implications

**The point** is the most important piece of information the author is trying to convey in the passage. Your job as a reader, is to find this point. By the end of your first read-through, you should be able to identify the main point the author is trying to convey.

**The background** is the information that you need, in order to understand the point. Sometimes, the author makes twisting statements that makes it difficult to understand whether a statement is background information or a supporting evidence. So, you should be cautious whenever you see additional information.

**Support** is the additional information given by the author in the form of evidence or examples, in order to support the main point that has been made. You should always keep an eye at the various

evidences and supporting examples that the author provides.

**Implications** are the after effects of the main point. They are the end results. The consequences. Implications are quite easy to understand when compared to the other three building blocks of a Reading Comprehension passage.

The main purpose behind identifying the components of a reading comprehension passage, is to understand the basic structure and organization of the passage. Understanding this is really important, since the GRE asks you questions based on structure, organization, tone, and main idea behind the passage. So, understanding these basic components will help you answer such questions quickly.

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## CHAPTER 2

# 8 Types of Questions you will see on Reading Comprehension

*“Understanding the question types that you will see on test day will help you devise proper answering strategies and elimination techniques.”*

On an average, a Reading Comprehension passage has 3-5 questions and the end of it. But these questions are of several kinds, and each of them requires a distinct skill set to answer. We have categorized all such questions, and have also included the strategies you need to implement, if you want to solve them all. Here are the most popular types of questions you will see on the Reading Comprehension passages:

## 1. Main Idea Questions

These are probably the most frequent questions you will see on any reading comprehension passage. Main idea questions ask you to identify the **main idea or the primary purpose** behind the passage that is given. Example questions are:

- In this passage, the author is primarily concerned with...?
- Which of the following would be the most appropriate title for the given argument?

## 2. Tone of the Author Questions

Considered as a tricky question by many students, tone of the author questions ask you to identify the tone of the author, or the passage. Examples include:

- The author's attitude towards contemporary cinema can be best described as...?
- The passage regards the idea of modern artistic activity with...?

## 3. Specific Fact Questions



These are the questions that ask you to spot information that is specifically included as a fact or truth. **Specific fact questions will often be consequential in nature.** They usually look like this:

- The author refers to 'example phrase' in line 5, primarily in order to... ?
- According to the passage, the critics considered the ideas found in the novelist's work to be... ?

## 4. Implied Questions

**Implied questions ask you, as a reader, to identify an idea which is suggested or implied, either directly or indirectly.** For example, an implied question looks like this:

- It can be inferred from the passage that, in evaluating the scientist's theory, some of the critics were....?
- The passage suggests that if the predictions of the geological department were to be true, it would be....?

## 5. Structural Questions

Structural questions, as the name suggests, ask you to identify the technique, or the writing style adopted by the author, in presenting facts or views. For example:

- Which of the following best describes the structure of the passage?
- Which of the following best describes the organization of the lines 17 through 23?

## 6. Extrapolation Questions

Widely regarded as the most twisted of all Reading Comprehension questions, extrapolation questions require you to extrapolate or compare the author's ideas to other situations, including situations that are analogous. In order to answer this type of questions, you must go beyond what is stated in the passage, draw an inference from the passage, and then match it with the situations given in the answer choices. Example questions are:

- Which of the following situations is most closely analogous to the situation described by the author as an irony, in lines 11 and 12?
- Which of the following describes a situation that is analogous to the situation described in the second paragraph?

## 7. Negative or Exception Questions

These are the questions that ask you which of the given answer choices is not true according to the author or the passage, or which of the answer choices with which the author of the passage would not agree. Examples are:

- The passage states all of the following about mitochondria, except?
- The author asserts that technology has led us do all of the following miraculous experiments, except?

## 8. Contextual/Definition of a term or word Questions

These are the questions that test your ability to work out the meaning of an unfamiliar word, based on context within the passage. For example:

- As it is used in the passage, the term 'convivial' can be best described as?
- The term 'inchoate', used by the author in line 18, refers to?

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### CHAPTER 3

# 7 Trap Answers to Avoid on Reading Comprehension

*One of the reasons why students find it difficult to separate the wrong answers from the right ones, is because they fall prey to the trap answers.*

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There are a few types of answer choices that can be eliminated immediately, without even considering if they are locally right or not. The answer choices for the questions in Reading Comprehension have a few rules, and those answer choices that don't follow them can be ruled out immediately, using the Process of Elimination method. You can do this easily, if you know where to spot the mistake. Here's a brief guide on how to spot answer choices that can be ruled out right away as incorrect.

If you readily jump to conclusions when you come across the first choice that looks “good”, there is a great chance you might get the question wrong, because there could be other choices that are far better. But since you haven’t read them yet, you don’t know it. So, the best way to handle such questions, is to narrow down answer choices using the process of elimination until you get the best choice.

If you really try and follow the process of elimination, you will easily find out that finding out the right answer is actually really easy. One of the reasons why most students find it difficult to separate the wrong answers from the right ones, is because they do not follow the process of elimination. To illustrate further, take a look at an example of what the given choices for a question might look like:

- If you misread the passage, this looks right
- Maybe right — close call with some subtle difference most students miss
- Correct answer!
- The opposite of the correct answer
- Something completely off topic, but it sounds impressive

So, if you really take a closer look, there is only one right answer, and the remaining are pretentiously close to being right. Below are the trap answer choices that you should eliminate immediately, no matter how appropriate, correct or logical they sound. We have also included examples for each of the answer types, so you will have a clear cut understanding of how such answers would look like, on the real GRE.

*There is only one right answer, and the remaining are pretentiously close to being right.*

## **1. Answer choices that use extreme or categorical words such as “only, all, always, every, never and exclusively”**

The GRE, being an international exam, tries to be as neutral as possible, and never does it include such extreme sounding statements, words, or phrases. You should never consider answer options containing such words as right, because the **Reading Comprehension** passage itself is neutral, and never tries to be too extreme, be it positive or negative.

Consider a reading comprehension passage where the author talks about viral fever that spread through East Africa. Example answer choices that are most definitely wrong, are shown below:

1. According to the author, all women in East Africa suffer from the viral fever
2. According to the author, only women in East Africa suffer from the viral fever
3. According to the author, women in East Africa will never suffer from the viral fever
4. According to the author, women in East Africa have always suffered from the viral fever

## **2. Answer choices that make use of information that doesn't appear in the text**

Also known as out of context answers. These answer choices, while logically correct, do not use information from the passage, and hence can be considered as out of context. Most students make a huge mistake here, by linking the logic given in the answer option, to common sense. Remember, **you should never use common sense on reading comprehension passages. General knowledge usually doesn't apply here, because it is the author's opinion that really counts. So, leave out the answer options that are beyond the scope of the passage, no matter how right they are.**

Consider a reading comprehension passage where the author talks about viral fever that spread through East Africa. Example answer choices that are most definitely wrong, are shown below:

1. According to the author, women in West Africa suffer from the viral fever due to heredity. (West Africa is completely out of scope)
2. According to the author, women in East Africa suffer from the viral fever because they are generally weaker than men. (Common sense, hence out of scope)

### **3. Answer choices in which facts are distorted**

**If an answer option has any of the facts distorted or slightly changed,** then such an answer option can never be right. Only those options that have the exact facts to back them up, should be considered as right.

Consider a reading comprehension passage where the author talks about viral fever that spread through East Africa due to poor medical facilities. Example answer choices that are most definitely wrong, are shown below:

1. According to the author, women in East Africa suffered from the viral fever last year, because of the civil war. (distorted statement)

## 4. Answer choices that ask you to make judgments

Any answer choice that asks you to affirm that one method/approach/thought is “better, or more successful, or more efficient” than another, can be considered wrong without second consideration. Passages on the GRE never ask the reader to judge anything, and the judgment will have already been made by the author. Hence, any answer option that needs your judgment, is wrong.

Consider a reading comprehension passage where the author talks about viral fever that spread through East Africa. Example answer choices that are most definitely wrong, are shown below:

1. Women in East Africa are more easily prone to suffer from the viral fever than men.  
(asks you to make a comparison/judgment without sufficient proof)

## 5. Answer choices that include outrageous, illogical, unscientific, or politically incorrect statements

No passage on the GRE includes controversial, or outrageous statements. Like we discussed already, reading comprehension passages are as neutral as they can be. The GRE is strictly against any sort of discrimination (religious, racial, gender, etc.) and its passages never try to offend any particular set of people. So, such answer options will never be true.

Consider a reading comprehension passage where the author talks about viral fever that spread through East Africa. Example answer choices that are most definitely wrong, are shown below:

1. According to the author, women in East Africa suffer from the viral fever because they are allowed to socialize. (outrageous statement)
2. It is the duty of a woman to sit at home and take care of the household. (Politically incorrect, gender discrimination.)
3. According to the author, women in East Africa suffer from the viral fever because they are usually prone to diseases. (illogical)

## **6. Answer choices that are true, but assume something that is not mentioned in the passage**

Sometimes, the situations mentioned in the answer option might sound true, but if you take a closer look, a small assumption will be made, which invalidates the entire option. The test takers purposefully do this to test your logical reasoning skills. So, you need to remember that if some assumption has been made which is not mentioned anywhere in the passage, then that answer option can be considered wrong.

Consider a reading comprehension passage where the author talks about viral fever that spread through East Africa. Example answer choices that are most definitely wrong, are shown below:

1. Pregnant women in East Africa are prone to the viral fever, because they probably don't exercise much. (an assumption has been made)



## 7. Answer choices that cannot be backed by solid proof from within the passage

No matter how convincing an answer option might seem, you should never treat it as true, as long as it doesn't have a solid evidence or proof that supports the assertion. The proof can be anything from a statistic to an example, but it should be mentioned within the passage. Otherwise, you should treat such an answer as invalid.

Consider a reading comprehension passage where the author talks about viral fever that spread through East Africa. Example answer choices that are most definitely wrong, are shown below:

1. According to a survey, women in East Africa suffer from the viral fever more often than women in West Africa. (no solid proof, or details of the survey)

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### CHAPTER 4

# The 5 Step Process to Destroy Reading Comprehension on the GRE

*A step by step process for those busy students looking for some quick information on skyrocketing their performance on the Reading Comprehension section.*

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If you don't have the time to read the entire guide, and are looking for some quick information, here is a step by step process you can deploy, if you want to score high on the reading comprehension section. Though brief descriptions have been given for each of the steps, we have discussed each step in great detail, in the following chapters.

## **1. Read the first paragraph and the first and last sentences in the other paragraphs**

When you begin to read the passage, you should not read it in its entirety. Instead, you must employ a smart strategy that will save lots of time. Read only the first and last paragraphs of the passage, making sure you clearly understand what it is that the author is trying to convey. This is because, you should try as much as you can to not come back to read this part once you read the questions. If you did this part right, you should be able to answer questions as soon as you see them.

The first paragraph contains the main idea behind the passage, and the last paragraph contains the conclusion, and will generally give you an idea of the author's tone and intentions. Now, once you are done with the first and the last paragraphs, move to the others. Even here, you must not read the entire text. Remember to read only the first and the last one or two sentences in the other

paragraphs and understand the structure of the paragraph. Repeat the steps for the rest of the paragraphs, and you will be left with an overview of the entire passage in a few sentences.

For example, these must be the thoughts in your mind as you read the entire passage: “Okay. So, the 1st paragraph claims that XYZ is a newly found phenomenon and hence must be welcomed, the 2nd paragraph says it’s must not be necessarily true and that we should be careful about it, because of a few implications [with examples], but the 3rd paragraph says that XYZ is still important to solve majority of cases, and the 4th and the final paragraph concludes that although XYZ works 90% of the time, it is rather foolish to think that it is the only cure.”

## 2. Make notes as you read

Making notes while reading the passage is a smart student’s way of scoring higher on the Reading Comprehension section. Writing quick notes will keep your brain naturally engaged and help you move through the passage deliberately, while remembering most of the details that you have read. Visual learning is a powerful way of remembering things for a long time, and when you make notes out of the given passage, you are not only doing it to remember it for longer, but you are also making it easy for you to refer to the details later.

It is a lot better strategy spend a few extra seconds jotting down helpful notes than to waste several minutes looking for that sentence later on. There are several techniques to take down notes intelligently. If you really want to save time, you should try and keep the notes as small as possible. Identify the most relevant information, and write down key words or phrases that are most

relevant to the topic at hand — things like dates, names, theories, definitions. Replace all the hard sounding words with simple words that you can easily understand.

You can also, use shorthand, or texting lingo, along with various forms of illustrations, symbols, tree diagrams, relationships, arrows, etc. This will significantly shorten the information you need to write, and will maximize efficiency.

### 3. Identify Key Words and Signal Words

The only way you can solve any reading comprehension question on the GRE, is by understanding key words, and signaling words, and what they mean to the passage. We cannot stress the importance of key words and signaling words any more than this. While skimming through each paragraph, you should scan the entire paragraph for keywords and signaling words used by the author. These are very important, as they more often than not asked in the questions that follow the passage. Plus, when you encounter an inference or a detailed question, you will know exactly where to go in the paragraph.

Every Reading Comprehension passage has a few to many key words and phrases. These are also known as signaling words. Words like “First, second, third, furthermore, on the other hand, for example, namely, for one thing, in addition, nevertheless, for these reasons, proponents believe, critics believe, but, however, whether/if, according to, therefore, consequently, In contrast, claims, goes so far as to claim, others argue”, etc.

As you practice solving more and more Reading Comprehension passages, you will start to think like the test makers, and develop a sense for where the test makers are likely to draw questions from.

## 4. Recap With a Visual Movie

Once you finish reading the entire passage, and finish writing down notes, you shouldn't start solving questions right away. Since you are under pressure, there is great chance that you have forgotten some of the details given by the author in passage, by the time you finish answering the first question. **Since the first question is most often a main idea question, you can easily answer it, as it is always at the top of your mind.**

But in order to answer the remaining questions, you will have to remember all the details perfectly, since you ideally don't want to go back and search for them in the passage again and again. So, what you need to do is, when you think you are ready to start answering questions, you should stop doing everything else, close your eyes, and play a movie inside your head. This movie must be a visual of the passage that you have just read, and must have a proper sequence. Doing this will not take more than 10-20 seconds, but it will help you cement the entire story in your head. When you can do this successfully, start answering questions, and you will see the difference in how much information from the passage you are able to retain.

## 5. Start Answering The Questions

Now we have already discussed the various types of questions you will find on the reading comprehension section, it will be easier for you to identify a question type and answer it accordingly, with a

proper strategy. Remember that for Multiple Select questions, you don't get partial credits for getting one or two options right. You will have to choose the entire answer correctly, by selecting all applicable options, and only then will your answer be considered correct.

Also, when answering Multiple Select questions, you should remember to treat each answer option separately. We will discuss more on this later. Now, while answering questions related to the tone of the author or the writing style, you should remember to automatically eliminate answer choices that hint that the author is being completely negative. If an answer choice implies that the author has used drastic or extreme language to criticize the topic he/she writes on, then you should automatically disqualify that answer choice.

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## CHAPTER 5

# 26 Tips and Strategies to Destroy Reading Comprehension on the GRE

*The most extensive list of strategies you will ever find, that will help you on your conquest of the most dreaded section on the GRE.*

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Now, for those of you who have the time, and the patience required, let us begin this fascinating journey. We will now discuss some extremely powerful tips and strategies that will help you master the reading comprehension section. These proven strategies have helped hundreds of students score high on the reading comprehension section of the GRE. While this is the most exhaustive, detailed guide there ever is, it isn't complete yet. Rest assured, we will be adding new strategies every now and then, so don't forget to keep checking this space often.

## **1. Start Reading Today**

This might sound pretty straightforward, but it is very true. It is also something that gets neglected very often. If you are planning to take the GRE sometime next year, you should start reading a lot, right from today. Even though tricks and tips will help you improve your performance on the Reading Comprehension as a topic, making reading a habit will make you a better reader, and a better judge of different styles of writing. This will not only make you better as an individual, but will also help you score higher on the test. There are tons of books, newspapers, and magazines at your disposal, but only a handful of them will actually help you with your GRE prep. Don't worry, we have a list.

Some of the best and the most resourceful newspapers and magazines you can subscribe to are:

- The New Yorker (<https://www.newyorker.com/>)
- The Economist (<http://www.economist.com>)
- Scientific American (<http://www.scientificamerican.com>)
- MIT Technology Review (<https://www.technologyreview.com>)
- The Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com>)

If you make an honest effort to read these every single day, you will not only improve your reading comprehension skills by leaps and bounds, but you will also come across hundreds if not thousands, of new vocabulary. Which is exactly what you need, to ace the Verbal section on the GRE.

And if possible, get into a habit of reading from a screen rather than a conventional book. All of the aforementioned newspapers and magazines have their own electronic versions and websites for you to read from, and it helps if you read them online rather than on paper, because that is what you do on the GRE. Yes, it is rather difficult and probably uncomfortable to read from a screen, and reading a conventional book seems rather nice, but the more you get used to reading from a computer screen, the more comfortable you will be on test day. Plus, you'll be saving a few trees too!

## 2. Read Before You Sleep

Make it a habit to read before you go to bed. No, not Facebook news feeds, funny cat memes, or random tweets, but useful stuff. Stuff that will improve your thinking capacity, and your comprehension. If you can, try and read a few pages of a novel or a news item on the



internet. Try to read on your laptop or a tablet, at least for 30 minutes before you go to bed, and if that isn't possible, try reading at least a few pages of a book before going to bed.

This will help you a lot in the long run, because the more you get your mind used to reading, the sharper it will be on the day of your test. Plus, if you can understand complex things when you are sleepy, imagine what you can do when you're awake.

### 3. Paraphrase Extensively

More often than not, you will see a lot of technical jargon in the passages. Don't get intimidated by the terminology that you are not familiar with. The GRE doesn't test your ability to remember or have the knowledge of technical terms and jargon. Even native speakers would not know much about a lot of terms and vocabulary used in the passages. So, all you need to do is, replace that one particular term with some familiar or easy word that you can understand, and continue reading the passage. This situation is particularly common when it comes to passages on science and technology. So, if you don't understand a word, substitute that with a commonly known word.

For example, the passage says: "Stomatopods are marine crustaceans". Now, all you know is that marine means something related to water. So, you can easily replace that sentence with something like: "Tomatoes are weird animals in water." See how easy it becomes? Of course, it does not make any sense, but you would agree that the latter sentence is a lot easier to recollect, even after five to ten minutes of reading.

First of all, Tomatoes is something you can easily remember, and you can still link it to the original word Stomatopods. Second, the GRE is never going to ask you what exactly a crustacean means. It might, however, ask you relevant questions, which you can easily answer if you have read the passage well enough. Even, in an improbable event where there comes a question asking you the meaning of the word crustacean, you can still answer it with ease, because you already have a solid idea of the topic, and you can make an educated guess as to what it means.

## 4. Practice In a Timed Setting

There is only one mantra to succeed: Practice, practice and practice even more. A lot of students do follow this mantra, but they leave out one little aspect: Time. It is important to practice all your tests in a timed setting. It is easy to solve a question in ten minutes, and almost anyone can do it. But doing it in under 100 seconds is way too hard, and only those who have practiced for a long time can do that repeatedly. Ergo, those are the ones with high scores on the GRE. You will also have to learn when you should stop trying and move on, and this only happens when you are used to practicing in a test-like environment.

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*There is only one mantra to succeed: Practice, practice and practice even more.*

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A lot of students fail to practice in a timed setting, and hence end up with time management issues during the test. Don't be one of those guys. Even if you are not writing a test, and even if it is just a few practice questions you are doing for fun, have a timer with you, and

set it for 100 seconds. Practice like athletes. Athletes don't just jog during practice. They work as hard as they do when they are in a competition. That's how you should practice. Remember, the harder you practice, the easier the game will be.

## 5. Ace Sentence Equivalence

Scoring more points on the Reading Comprehension section depends on how well you can solve Sentence Equivalence questions. What? How?

If you are one of those advanced students, you will find out that Sentence Equivalence questions are real time-savers. If you are very good at vocabulary, and if you have practiced well enough, you will find out that Sentence Equivalence questions can be solved in under a minute. Yes, we know of a lot of students who can solve Sentence Equivalence questions in 40-50 seconds. And you can easily do it under 60 seconds, if you practice hard enough.

Now, this means, you are saving yourselves 30 seconds of precious time per question. That equals to about 4-5 extra minutes on your watch, which you can use to solve around 2-3 questions on Reading Comprehension. It might sound crazy if you are a beginner, but it's true. All you need to do is become a master of Sentence Equivalence, and Bam! You have lots of extra time to solve Reading Comprehension questions.

## 6. Use Error Logs

Create an error log. If you are new to this, an error log is basically a log where you note down all the errors that you make, during your prep. It can be a practice question, or an entire test; doesn't matter.

**The more effectively you use the error log, the more clarity you will have on where exactly are you, in terms of readiness to take the test.**

The error log also validates your strengths and weaknesses, so you will have solid data in order to make changes to your study plan.

If you try and use the error log effectively for a while, you will be able to see a distinctive pattern of the mistakes you make and the areas you make them in. Believe it or not, the error log will be your best teacher! You can only get a higher score when you know if you are improving constantly or not. It is quite easy to create an error log; it can be anything, but an excel file would be the most preferred option, since it is easier to not only use, but also make changes in the future. Make an excel sheet with the entire list of topics you are going to study in the next few months: Algebra, Geometry, Text Completion, etc. And write down your confidence levels in the next column, on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being 'very confident' and 1 being 'clueless'.

## **7. Join GRE Forums and Groups**

If there is one place where you can learn for the GRE for free, it is forums. Most students don't prefer forums as a means of learning because they mainly consist of fellow students, and most students don't like to learn from fellow students. They think they are all at the same level. But you couldn't be more wrong if you are thinking the same. First of all, not everyone is at the same level, and second of all, forums don't have just the current students. There are tons of students who have already written the GRE and scored high; and there are lots of trainers who help out students with free suggestions and strategies.

So, if you can participate in forum discussions and Facebook groups that are dedicated to GRE, you will not only learn so much, but you will also actually meet a lot of smart people and learn from them. If you are one of those smart students, you can also try and help out other students with their doubts and problems. Forums are a great way of networking with other people who have the same interests as you.

## 8. How to Skim the Right Way?

Here is a great tip for you to read the entire passage quickly: Read the first and last paragraphs of the passage slowly and very carefully, rephrasing each sentence in your head. If possible, write down notes on the scratch paper, paraphrasing the given complex sentences into something that you can easily understand. Make sure you clearly understand what it is that the author is trying to convey, because ideally, you shouldn't come back to read this part once you read the questions. As soon as you see the questions, you should be able to answer them.

Now, once you are done with the first and the last paragraphs, move to the others. Read the first one or two sentences in the other paragraphs in order to visualize the structure of the paragraph. Reading this much will be enough, and will give you a bird's eye view of what is going to happen next, in that paragraph. Repeat the steps for the rest of the paragraphs, and you will be left with an overview of the entire passage in a few sentences.

For example, these must be the thoughts in your mind as you read the entire passage: "Alright. So, the 1st paragraph claims that X happens very often, the 2nd paragraph says it's not necessarily so and that there are quite a few exceptions [with examples], but the

3rd paragraph says that X still holds true in the majority of cases, and the 4th and the final paragraph concludes that although X happens 90% of the time, it is rather foolish to think that X is always bound to happen.”

See how things can be condensed into just a few lines. Having a clear idea of the entire structure of the passage allows you to answer general questions such as “What is the tone of the author?” and “What according to the author is the main idea of the passage?” etc. These sort of questions are very easy and can be answered within 10 seconds, if you have a crystal clear idea of the entire passage, which can be explained within a few lines like we showed above. So, basically, if you use this strategy, you will be capable of answering about 50% of Reading Comprehension questions easily, within a few seconds.

## 9. Tweet To a Friend

Now that we have discussed the above technique, there is a similar technique that we have found to be extremely resourceful while solving Reading Comprehension questions. It is called “Text to a friend” or “Tweet to a friend” format. This format is fairly simple. What if, as soon as you finish reading a particular paragraph from the passage, you are asked to send a summary of it as a text message or a single tweet to your friend? Now, you know that you cannot write more than 140 characters in a tweet. Which means roughly around 20 words.

So, if you can condense a 100 word paragraph into 20 words, or a tweet sized paragraph, it means that you not only have completely understood the points made by the author in that paragraph, but also have reduced the time required to answer each question. If

there are 5 paragraphs in the passage, you now have only about 80-100 words, which is far easier and far more time saving to skim through, when you read questions.

This technique has been tried and tested by us and our students, and it has proved to be extremely effective in saving time. On an average, students saved at least 5 minutes per passage (on 4-5 questions) on their practice tests. So, we urge you to give it a try in your next practice session, and see how well it works for you.

## **10. Look For Keywords**

While reading the first 1-2 sentences in the beginning of each paragraph, you should also scan the rest of the text in the paragraph, especially looking out for keywords such as important names, dates, and other stand-out terminology used by the author. These are very important, as they more often than not asked in the questions that follow the passage. Plus, when you encounter an inference or a detailed question, you will know exactly where to go in the paragraph.

You might ask why this technique is a time-saver when you still have to go back and read the text all over again. But the truth is, even if you are ever so careful about reading the entire passage the first time around, some of the inference/support questions on the GRE are so detailed, that most of the time you will have to go back to read the lines anyway. So, if you have already figured out the details like names and dates and other keywords, you don't have to waste additional time on finding them all over again. You know where exactly to go back. This saves quite a few seconds, believe it or not.

## 11. Read Aggressively

Writing quick notes as you read the passage will keep your brain naturally engaged and help you move through the passage deliberately. More about note taking later, but this process is what we call Aggressive Reading. Aggressive Reading is when you are reading quickly but still understand the stuff that's in there. You are not simply reading fast, you are reading fast and effectively.

As you read, jot down a quick summary for each paragraph on the scratch paper, and note the main ideas names, theories, and other important details mentioned in the passage. Students often skip this note-taking step because they think it takes too much time. But think about it: It is much better to take a few extra seconds to jot down helpful notes than to waste potential minutes staring blankly at the screen looking for that sentence that keeps hiding from you. Also, your notes will provide useful shortcuts and shortened phrases for some of the broader reading comprehension questions, which can actually help you save time in the end.

## 12. The Rotten Tomato Technique

Some answer choices look like the perfect answers to the given question, but in reality, they are only 90% correct. Students often tend to read only the 90% and their futuristic brains tell them that the remaining 10% is going to be the same. So, they think that it is the answer to the given question, and since it is 90% right, it must be correct. But sadly, the GRE test makers are far ahead of you when it comes to setting up traps within answer choices.



It very so often happens that there is some sort of mistake or an assumption in the other 10% of the answer choice that you thought was perfect. But out of excitement and anxiety, and not to mention the clock that is always sprinting, you overlook that one part of the answer, and select it as right. Little do you know that the remaining 10% contains something that is blatantly wrong, and thus it invalidates the entire answer option.

This is why we at CrunchPrep use the Rotten Tomato Technique. Picture this: When you are buying tomatoes from the market, what do you do? You inspect each tomato 100%, and only if you are sure that the entire tomato is healthy, you purchase it. If you find any dark spot, or a rotten part, then no matter how small it is, you put it back. This is the same strategy you should use to check if an answer option is suitable or not. If ever there is one thing – even if it is a single word – that doesn't seem right, or dilutes the entire sentence, then you should treat the answer option as invalid, and move on to the next choice.

So, the next time you are solving questions on Reading Comprehension, remember that the Rotten Tomato technique gives you healthy results.

### 13. **Pause and Play**

Sometimes when you are reading a long Reading Comprehension passage, your eyes feel glazed and watery. If you feel glazed eyes starting to set in, look away from the passage. By just turning your eyes in a different direction, you will be, in a way, hitting a reset button on your brain. When you look away from the screen, or close your eyes for a few seconds, you should also take a few deep

breaths, and get some oxygen up to the brain. Just a few seconds of rest will make a huge difference to your performance, and you can then return to the passage.

Don't start thinking about wasting seconds here. Your state of mind is far more important than time, and if you really think your mind deserves a few seconds of rest, then maybe should give it some rest.

## 14. Don't Read Too Fast

Don't read too much too fast. Your brain has a natural tendency to block off too much information at a time, and when you read too fast when you are under pressure, your brain simply blocks things off. This is a bit similar to how when you forget someone's name, you cannot recollect it no matter how hard you try, but you get it at a later point when you are doing something else. Whenever too much information is being thrown at your brain, it cannot take it all at once. And this is why it shuts off for a few seconds, or even minutes, and you can't get anything into your head for a while.

This will only waste your time during the test, and will increase pressure on your brain even further. So it is best for you if you can read at a steady pace. If you would like to read faster, you should understand that speed reading cannot be achieved overnight. It comes with a lot of practice, and you should start doing it right now. We have discussed about Speed Reading techniques in great detail. Take a look at the final chapter ([//crunchprep.com/gre-reading-comprehension-guide#six](https://crunchprep.com/gre-reading-comprehension-guide#six)) if you would like to know more.

## 15. Identify Signaling Words

Every Reading Comprehension passage has a few to many key words and phrases. These are also known as signaling words. Words like “First, second, third, furthermore, on the other hand, for example, namely, for one thing, in addition, nevertheless, for these reasons, proponents believe, critics believe, but, however, whether/if, according to, therefore, consequently, In contrast, claims, goes so far as to claim, others argue”, etc.

This list is far from comprehensive, but you get the idea. As you work through more and more Reading Comprehension passages during practice, you will start to think like the test makers, and develop a sense for where the test makers are likely to draw questions from. This will be of great advantage to you, because if you can anticipate the oncoming question, you will be mentally ready with the answer, as you read through the passage.

## **16. Focus is Key**

The passages on Reading Comprehension are more often than not dull, boring, and concern subjects you either find uninteresting or are completely alien to. But that is not something you should worry about, because you are not alone. The test makers select passages as to make everyone feel uncomfortable; not just you. So, if you find a passage unfair or super hard, remember that it is the same for everyone else. Every test taker is in the same boat as you are.

Don't beat yourself up over not having read up on the Nazi culture or quantum theory or the lifecycle of dolphins. The test givers don't expect you to have any expertise on such abstruse subjects. They are only testing your ability to read quickly, to extract and process information efficiently and to draw inferences and make logical connections even when you know nothing about the material. So,

all you need to do is settle down, take a deep breath, accept the challenge, and start reading. Maintaining focus is key. Which is why we ask students to take down notes as they read the passage. You are writing notes primarily to help you to focus on the text.

## 17. Practice Active Reading

It is very important to read actively, not passively. Passive reading is for knowledge, or for pleasure, but not to score high on a competitive test like the GRE. You need to actively extract information, instead of passively absorbing it. Focus on the main points. Be strategic. Get used to reading only certain parts of a passage carefully.

These include: the opening paragraph, the conclusion and the opening and closing sentences of each paragraph. They help you answer straightforward questions like: What is the author's main point? Why is the author writing this? What is the author's writing style?, What is the author's attitude towards the topic?, etc.

## 18. Unhear That Song Already

It is extremely common that you always have that one song in your head during the entire time you take the test. You are not alone; research shows that close to 90% of us have this phenomenon, popularly called as an earworm. While this is completely natural, and there is nothing wrong in it, it may be one of the reasons your brain cannot give its 100% during the test. The more activities your brain does, the lesser it spends its focus on the test.

So, before you go into the test center, you will have to cleanse your brain off the song that's stuck inside. Use Unhear It (<http://unhearit.com>) or similar websites, and get that song out of your head before you leave for the test center, or even better, before you enter the testing area. We have tested this, and it seems to work fine most of the time.

## **19. Rephrase the Original Question**

If you thought that you will be safe once you finish reading the dreadful passage, you should probably hold that thought for a while. The questions that follow the passage are equally deceitful, and they will never be straightforward. You should always be on the lookout for troubling questions which include double and triple conceptual questions. This means, if the author has included more than one concept or scenario, there might be questions that are complex and lengthy in nature. These questions may also include double negatives, or double trigger words just to confuse you further.

One way to solve these questions, is to break down the question part by part, and analyze it. This is a really effective strategy, but it takes time for you to break down questions, and then find answers to each part separately from the passage. Instead, you can simply read the questions thoroughly and carefully, and then based on what you understood, you can rephrase the question in your own words. This is make the question sound simpler, and it will be easy for you to go back to the passage in search of the answer if the question is easier to understand.

## **20. Check the Number of Questions First**

Before you decide how much time you should be vesting on a Reading Comprehension passage, you should see how many questions there are in total. Before you even begin reading the passage, check to see how many question are given, and then decide on the time you would like to spend on the passage. If there are too many questions and you think it would take a lot of time, then it is better to mark it and skip to the rest of the section. If you don't do this, you'll risk reading the entire passage and then find out that you want to skip it altogether. This means, you will have wasted around 4-5 minutes without any outcome. So, make sure you check the number of questions before you start reading.

## 21. Be Careful With Multiple Select Questions

When you are answering Multiple Select questions, you should remember to treat each answer option separately. Sometimes, it is easy to get lost in the details, and students assume that if they are asked to select multiple answers, then it must mean that both option A and B, for example, must be true in order for the answer to be correct.

No, that is not how it works. You should be treating every answer choice separately, on its own. If you are reading option A, don't bother about the other options. See if A fits as the answer, and if does, select it. Only then should you be moving to option B. When reading option B, forget about the other choices, including A. Two answer choices cannot be combined to form one answer, and hence you should treat them separately.

## 22. Embrace the Passage

As much as you wish it were true, you know that there won't be any Reading Comprehension passages on your favorite TV shows. All Reading Comprehension passages are designed to trouble you with new concepts, new information, and new questions. But, if you are a smart reader, you would not get bogged down by the sheer length or depth of questions and paragraphs. Instead, what you should do is, embrace the passage completely.

Yes, you read it right. Embrace the passage as if it were your friend. Appreciate it for its uniqueness, greatness, and its wealth of information, but also embrace it for its stupidity, stubbornness, and its strangeness. Just as with your best friend, you should understand that a Reading Comprehension passage has its own flaws, and keep in mind that it is always looking to trouble you, and waste your time.

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*Embrace the passage as if it were your friend.*

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While embracing the passage and its pluses and minuses, you should also learn to love it despite what it is. Sometimes, it is really difficult to keep your focus on the passage, because no matter how much you try, you hate to learn about orangutans or about the science behind natural reflexes. What you can do, however, is try and fall in love with the subject. Tell yourself that today you really want to know why stars die, or why Rasputin led to his own downfall. You should learn to fake your love for the passage, deceive it with your fake enthusiasm, and then destroy it when it finally surrenders to your relentless pursuit. That is how you master boring passages. It sounds evil, but you can't help it.

## **23. The Tone of the Author Is Never Negative on the GRE**

This is a very important point you should remember. The GRE being an internationally acclaimed test, doesn't ever include essays or paragraphs that are negative in nature. The test makers select the passages and design the questions so carefully that there won't be much room for negativity.

Hence, you can say that the tone of the author is either neutral (which is mostly the case), or positive or praising in nature. Now this doesn't mean the author does not criticize anything in the passage. Yes, there will be a lot of criticism, but most of it is constructive. Meaning, the author says that something is wrong, but he/she also gives the necessary reasons behind their stance. So, this qualifies the tone as neutral.

Sometimes, the author advocates for a particular reason or a cause, in which case, he/she is being positive about the topic. But there will not be many essays where the author severely criticizes and demeans someone or something in the passage. Hence, while answering questions related to the tone of the author or the writing style, you should remember to automatically eliminate answer choices that hint that the author is being completely negative. If an answer choice implies that the author has used drastic or extreme language to criticize the topic he/she writes on, then you should automatically disqualify that answer choice, and move on.

## **24. Pay Utmost Attention to Tough Reading Comprehension Passages**



These are very difficult to understand, especially because the author uses several traps to confuse you. You will find satiric comments which look like praises but are in fact criticisms, you will see multiple comparisons where the main idea is compared to other similar scenarios so as to confuse you about which of them is the main idea.

Often times, the author camouflages his/her opinion in the form of others' opinions. The passage has opinions of other people, but not the authors. You should be really careful here, and see whether the author is supporting or disapproving their opinions. When you think things are going beyond your control, stop reading. Mark it for review, and come back later with a fresher mindset. Maybe you will crack the code later. Why waste time now?

Be very careful when you see twisted questions. Sometimes you will be asked to provide analogies, or situations that are similar to the ones mentioned in the passage. These are some of the dangerous questions you will see, because every situation seems like an analogy to a beginner. So, you should practice such questions rigorously, and be ahead of the curve.

## **25. Make Notes Intelligently**

You can use several techniques to take down notes in an intelligent manner. Most students, when asked to make notes, write down a few sentences altogether. But think about it. Why do you take notes? So you can save time. But if you are writing down a few sentences every time you read a paragraph, are you really saving time, or wasting it even further?

If you really want to save more time, you should not keep writing sentences. **Instead, you should try and keep the notes as small as possible.** Now you may ask, how do you store lots of information with only a few words?

By being smart, is the answer. Identify the most relevant information. **Write down the key words or phrases that are most relevant to the topic at hand** — things like dates, names, theories, definitions — only the most important details should make the cut. Eliminate all the filler words and secondary details. **Replace all the tough-to-remember language with easy, and simple words.**

Paraphrase with exaggeration. Write whatever you want, as long as it fits the main theme, and you understand it.

Also, use shorthand, or texting lingo. Replace should with 'shd', question with 'ques', communicate with 'comm', etc. This is really helpful because, if you've ever noticed, writing is a lot slower process than typing. So, use shortened versions of words, and try writing what you have understood, instead of repeating sentences from the passage.

And, who said you have to use only words? You can use illustrations, symbols, tree diagrams, relationships, arrows, etc. This will significantly shorten the information you need to write, and will maximize efficiency.

## 26. The Best Time Saving Strategy

Students often use answer grids in order to save time. But did you know that there is an even better time saving strategy?

Using an answer grid while solving a Reading Comprehension question means you should keep shifting your focus while reading answer options on the screen, and while striking off options on the scratch paper. So moving your eyes off the screen and off the scratch paper repeatedly leads to lack of focus. It takes time to read, and then strike off options on the paper. Why waste time when there is a better alternative?

We usually recommend our students to use their left hand (or right, if you are a southpaw) and fold fingers as they eliminate each answer option. Confused? Don't be.

It is pretty simple. Assign options to each of your fingers, (A = thumb, B = index, C = middle, etc.) and fold fingers as you eliminated each of the options. This method is not only much simpler to apply, but it is much, much faster than any other method. Since you don't need to write anything on the paper, you don't need to look down, and you can keep your eyes on the screen!

We have asked our students to test this method during their practice tests, and on an average, they have saved 5-6 seconds per question! Now, 6 seconds might not seem like a lot to you, but they are invaluable. Don't believe me? You do the math: there are about 20 Reading Comprehension on the GRE. That's 20 questions multiplied by 6 seconds = 120 seconds, or two minutes. Which means, you will have enough time to solve another two questions! And that should give you a chance to increase a couple of points on your final score.

So, those are the various tips and strategies that you can use effectively, to completely annihilate the Reading Comprehension section. Other guides usually end here. But we at CrunchPrep want you to get yourself acquainted with some of the most advanced

techniques that you can use on the GRE. These advanced speed techniques will help you solve Reading Comprehension questions at the blink of any eye, and you can brag about your newly acquired skills with your friends.

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## CHAPTER 6

# 11 Speed Reading Techniques That Help You Conquer Reading Comprehension

*11 of the most advanced speeding techniques that will help you read and understand Reading Comprehension passages at lightning speed.*

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Reading is like exercising a muscle. What the gym is to your muscles, reading is to your mind. And just like you exercise your muscles every day in the gym, you should exercise your mind every day by reading.

We all have a capacity to read much faster than we actually do today. Our reading speed, just like the size of our muscles, changes as we go through life. During school, we go through about 150-200 words a minute, because we just learned how to read properly. During high school, you increase the speed automatically to 300 words per minute, because your brain develops quite quickly. When you go to college, you have lots of other things to do, and very little time available, which is why your brain automatically adjusts to reading 400 words per minute.

But the moment you get out of college, you no more have a reason to read lots of information every single day. That is when the brain starts to relax, and slowly but surely, the reading speed goes back to 200 words per minute. But the GRE requires that you read much faster than this. Actually, the higher your reading speed is, the higher your score will be, on the verbal section. So, how can you do that? How do you improve your reading speed drastically, in a very small time frame?

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*The higher your reading speed is, the higher your score will be.*

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Below are some fantastic reading techniques that we, and our students have used while studying for the GRE. These techniques are quite advanced in nature, and it takes several days to a few weeks for your brain to adjust to the new reading speeds. Also, these techniques require great amounts of practice and persistence from your end, so if you think you cannot put in a lot of effort in the coming few weeks, or if you don't have that much time before the test, try implementing at least one or two of the given techniques. Ideally, these tips are for those students who are targeting 165+ on

the Verbal section. But, even otherwise, if you have lots of time left before your test begins, you should try and implement them all, and practice as much as you can.

## 1. Chunk Reading

Chunk Reading is perhaps one of the most significant techniques used by advanced readers to gather as much information as they can in a very limited time. The technique is rather simple and straightforward: **Read multiple words at a time.** Normally, you read each word separately and as you move along, you understand the meaning of the sentence. But, this process takes time.

Instead, you should read chunks of words at a single instance, and complete every sentence in a maximum of two or three instances. For example, take the sentence: “The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.” Usually, you would read it as “The quick|brown|fox|jumped|over|the lazy|dog”. But, when you use the chunk reading technique, you read it as “The quick brown fox|jumped over the lazy dog”. There shouldn’t be any gap between reading each word. **More advanced readers read this entire sentence in one single instance, thus, reducing reading time drastically.**

So, the next time you see a piece of text, read the sentences in chunks and see how much time you are saving per paragraph. In a time limited environment such as the GRE, this technique will save you at least 2 seconds per 10 words. Which means, for an average Reading Comprehension passage that has 350 words, you will save 70 seconds of time.

## 2. Don’t Vocalize the Text

When you are reading this sentence, there is an inner voice inside you that is reading it out, and only you can hear it. This is called vocalizing, and it is a process the brain implements in order to completely understand what you are reading. Brilliant, but there is one problem with this: it takes lots of time. You must have already heard the fact that you can only read as fast as you can speak. This is because, we have been trained to do so, since childhood: to read aloud. And our brains have been hardwired to read only as fast as we can speak, albeit, not as fast as we would like.

When you read aloud, it takes time for the information seen by your eyes to reach the brain, which converts the visual text into sound, which you can hear as your inner voice, and then the brain again decodes information through this inner voice. This is quite a roundabout process. But it has been observed, however, that when you are reading at a superfast pace, the brain cannot vocalize the text. This is the reason why the average human tends to read at a comfortable pace; in order to avoid not understanding. It is a natural response, not your fault.

But you are not the average human, you are a GRE test taker. You cannot afford to read at a comfortable pace, since time is always pricking you from behind. So what do you do? You stop vocalizing the text you are reading. Now, this isn't as easy as it sounds, since you are going against the nature of your brain. It takes at least two weeks for you to fully take control of your brain. But meanwhile, you can use one tactic that works really well.

You should manually murmur a monotonous sound, slightly aloud, so that your brain can no more use your inner voice to vocalize text. The brain cannot do more than one task at a time. So, if you give your brain something else to follow, it cannot deploy its vocalizing power. Try doing this as you read any text material: Make a

monotonous sound such as “Mmmmmm” or “Eeeeeeeee” or any other repetitive sound throughout the time you read the text. At first it seems rather difficult to understand what you are reading, but within a few days, you will see that you are not only understanding what you read, but you have also increased your reading speed.

You can use this technique in the exam too, but make sure you are not making those sounds loud enough to disturb others. Else, you will have to face the proctor’s anger.

### 3. Ignore Useless Words

Wait, what? The GRE has useless words too? Not exactly. But every sentence in English has about 40% useless words. Useless in the sense, there is no point in using that word in the sentence, and one can easily understand the meaning of the sentence even if you remove the words entirely. Words like articles (A, an, the), tenses like ‘is, are’ etc., are not exactly vital to understand a sentence, in the context of a GRE passage. They are only used as ornaments to make the sentence sound grammatically correct.

Now, there is no point in reading all these auxiliary words, and since 40% of the passage consist of such words, you will be saving at least 40% of the time. Let us see an example, so you will understand it even better. This excerpt is about the GRE, taken from Wikipedia:

“The Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) is a standardized test that is an admissions requirement for most graduate schools in the United States. Created and administered by Educational Testing Service (ETS) in 1949, the exam aims to measure verbal reasoning,



quantitative reasoning, analytical writing, and critical thinking skills that have been acquired over a long period of time and that are not related to any specific field of study. The GRE General Test is offered as a computer-based exam administered at Prometric testing centers.”

Now the above paragraph takes about 20-25 seconds for the average reader to finish. And there are several unnecessary words in there. The test makers purposefully include them, so they can waste your valuable time. But, we are even smarter. We omit all those useless words from the paragraph, and rephrase it as:

GRE – admissions requirement – graduate schools US. Created by ETS 1949 – measure verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, analytical writing, and critical thinking skills. GRE – offered as computer-based exam – at Prometric centers.

The above sentence takes less than 10 seconds to read and understand. Do you see the difference? This shows how much time you can save if you omit unnecessary words from the passage. Now it is easy to do it when you omit it manually. But in the exam, you cannot simply delete those words. The words will be there, and you have to omit them in your mind. This isn't easy, but it can be done with practice, and it takes a couple of weeks at least for an average reader to read a sentence, and naturally omit the auxiliary words.

## 4. Avoid Rereading

This is one of the blunders students make while reading passages on Reading Comprehension. They read a particular sentence, but at the end of it, they aren't too confident to move on. So, what do they do? They go back and read it again to get more clarity. Now, this is

okay if you do it once, maybe twice. But once you begin to do this, you keep on stopping and going back to read things again and again. This wastes lots of time, without you actually noticing it. You think it is okay because you are understand it properly, but in reality, it isn't okay at all.

**This situation arises mainly due to lack of confidence.** If you are confident about yourself, you will be content with a single reading, and will not think of rereading stuff you have just read. Also, it might be because you are super tensed, that you totally forgot what you read a few seconds ago. Both situations are quite dangerous, and you should try your best to avoid them.

How can you do that? Well, to paraphrase YOLO, the quintessential juvenile acronym of the twenty first century, remember YORO, or You Only Read Once. That's how you do it. Make it a point to not reread any sentence. **If you think a particular sentence has lots of terminology in it and it is impossible to understand it in one go, try reducing your reading speed only for that one sentence. But, never ever go back.**

This makes you conscious about your reading, and you will read every word with 100% concentration. Hence, you won't have to waste time going back. **But, even after all this you think you will have to go back, do it when a relevant questions pops up after the passage.** If there is not even one question related to that sentence, why bother reading it again? So, if you see a question to which you are not sure of the answer, then you can go back and read that part again.

## **5. Train Hard**

Whenever you have free time, practice reading some of the hardest passages there are. Try searching online for advanced scientific research papers, or go to the library and read books about science, sociology, philosophy, etc. And don't read them for knowledge or for pleasure. Read them to improve your reading speed. Reading tough subject matters and articles with great speed improves your comprehension skills, and cognitive abilities. If you are able to understand complex theories even when you read at a great speed, it means that you will do a great job on the actual test.

Just like the other techniques we have discussed, this isn't very easy, but you can do it with lots of practice. Your brain slowly gets hardwired to understanding complex words and sentences even when you read fast. This helps you a lot, because one: in the test, you won't find passages that hard, which makes things even easier for you, and two: you will be ready to read and understand any passage you are given, irrespective of the topic.

## **6. Never Read Modifiers**

Most modifiers are believed to be useful phrases that give more information about the subject, in a sentence. But on the GRE, this more information is not required much, and on top of that, reading more information means taking more time to finish the passage. Which is exactly what we are trying to avoid here. Take a look at this example:

“Adolf Hitler, who is widely regarded as a symbol of violence and killing, is actually a loving father to his children.”

The phrase “who is widely regarded as a symbol of violence and killing” is a modifier here. It gives more information about the subject, which is Adolf Hitler in this case. Now there is no need to read this modifier, since it gives no new information to us.

Everyone knows that Hitler is widely regarded as a symbol of violence and killing. And since this is just additional information, the GRE will not ask you a question on it. **And hence, there is no point in reading it. By simply skipping it off, you are saving yourself a few seconds of time.** And the sentence “Adolf Hitler is actually a loving father to his children” makes perfect sense, and you can move on to the next sentence.

A typical Reading Comprehension passage on the GRE has about two or three modifiers, and if you make it a point to skip them all, you are doing yourself a favor. And if at all, in a highly unlikely situation, you see a question about that extra information in the modifier, you can always go back and read it.

## 7. Make A Visual Movie

You must have heard that most people are visual learners. What this means is, most of us learn things by either seeing them, or visualizing them happen. And visualizing things while reading isn't new to us either. Remember the scenes your mind creates whenever you read a novel? Be it a crime scene, a romantic dialogue, or an extraterrestrial invasion, we tend to create little movies inside our heads as we read the stories from books.

**This is a great talent that we humans have, and you will have to tap into this resource if you want to understand passages thoroughly.** Make small visual movies inside your head as you start reading the passage. Every passage has a hero and a villain. It has a scenario,

and a small plot. Use these attributes, weave together a nice visual story, and play it inside your brain while reading text from the screen. This is a great way of remembering things, and you will certainly not have to come back to read again, since the images are already stored in your brain in a sequence.

So, as soon as you see a question, your answer will come to you in the form of a vivid scene from the movie you created, and you can answer it with ease. This again, comes with practice, so use your free time effectively, and implement these neat little tricks at home.

## 8. Use a Pointing Device

Another fantastic way to improve your reading speed by leaps and bounds, is by using a pointing device. Anything from your index finger to a pencil can work as a pointing device. Since the text is on the screen, and the screen is at a distance from your eyes, it can be difficult to fix your eyes on the words for a long time. This is why you should use the pencil or your finger as a pointing device. This device tells your eyes that they should be following wherever it goes, and the faster you move the device, the faster your eyes will scan through the words. And the process we discussed under 'Chunk Reading' comes into play.

Research shows that people who use a pencil or a pen as a pointing device while reading, tend to improve their reading speeds by close to 50%, and still understand the entire stuff. This is because, your eyes will follow the pencil, and your brain will only focus on the words that the pencil goes through, and it doesn't bother about the rest of the world. This increases concentration levels, along with

reading speed. Try this technique the next time you read something. Our primary school teachers weren't wrong after all when they asked us to do the same.

## 9. Vertical Reading

This is probably the hardest of all speed reading techniques. As the name suggests, you should be reading text vertically. Which means, not word by word, but line by line at a time. Your eyeball should move downwards, instead of sideways. It is similar to chunk reading, but here, the chunk is an entire line of text. This is quite an uphill task for a beginner, and only the fastest readers in the world can do it, but you should try and get as close to it as possible.

A good way to start is, by reading newspapers and magazines. In particular, newspapers have narrow columns of text, and each line has around 5-7 words. This is quite an easy task for a beginner, and you should target reading a news item vertically downwards. Magazines are similar to newspapers, and if you can try and get scientific magazines, that'd be great.

Remember, this might seem next to impossible in the beginning, but you are only trying to get better. You may not be able to read long sentences in one second, but even if you can read one short sentence per second, you will skyrocket your reading speed.

## 10. Track Your WPM

WPM is Words Per Minute. Whenever you are reading – anything from a news article to a fiction novel – always have the timer with you. Almost all smartphones have a stopwatch application preinstalled, and you should put that to good use. Start the timer,

and then start reading. At the end of 5 minutes, check how many words you could read per minute. Or, you can use online tools to track your WPM count.

Spreader (<http://www.spreader.com>) is an awesome resource when it comes to keeping track of your WPM. You can copy paste the text you want to read, set the reading speed, and also how many words in a chunk you would want to read. It is an ideal tool for GRE aspirants who are looking to destroy Reading Comprehension. You should definitely check it out.

The average reader's WPM is around 250, but advanced readers can go up to 1000. But, since you aren't planning to be the world's fastest reader, you should ideally set a target of 500 WPM. This means you can read the average Reading Comprehension passage in about 40-60 seconds! Imagine the cushion you will have if you can finish off reading and understanding a passage within 60 seconds. Normally, you should set aside at least 5-6 minutes per passage (including reading and answering questions.) So if you can finish reading in 1 minute, you will have 4-5 minutes to answer 3-5 questions, which will be a cakewalk, seriously.

## 11. Use Blocking Devices

Whenever you see a long passage, you get a minor heart attack. You keep thinking that if you cannot answer all the questions at the end of the passage, it is going to be a complete waste of time. This worry creeps in at the last moment, and spoils your mood. This has happened quite often with our students, and we give them a simple solution. Concentrate only on the sentence you are currently reading, and use something to block off the remaining text. It can be anything: your palm, or the scratch paper you have, or anything.

Just try to block the text and make sure you can see only one line of text at a time. This will give you a feeling of ‘there is only one more line to go’, and you will finish off the entire passage sooner than you think.

## Conclusion

So, that’s about it. We have come to an end of this epic journey called the Destruction of Reading Comprehension. We have discussed about 38 invaluable strategies that you could use to improve not only your reading speed, but also your scores on the reading comprehension section.

This is by far the most comprehensive guide in the world, to help you ace the Reading Comprehension section in the GRE. If you think this is very helpful, or if you really loved it, share it with your friends right now! Our goal is to help as many students as we can. So what are you waiting for? Go share the living daylights out of this guide!

We almost forgot! If you think you would like to save this guide for future perusal, be our guest! **Download this entire guide as PDF**, and take it with you.



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