

Reading: Your Amazing Eyes!

Vanda North, currently ranked third fastest speed reader in the world, had been reading at a normal reading speed of 200wpm for 21 years of her adult life. She assumed that this was natural and unchangeable. When she realised the possibility of increasing her reading speed, she was both excited and furious. Excited to be reading initially at around 3000wpm but furious about the fact that she could have read far more in the same time or rather she could have spent more time with friends, on travel or to have just had more fun (Buzan, 1999, p.71).

To recap from last week: You can double your reading speed by guiding your eyes, either with your finger, a bookmark, a pen or pencil. Doing this prevents your eyes from backtracking, regressing and you from re-reading something you have already seen. Almost everyone has a tendency to re-read, and half your potential speed is lost in that one habit alone! Gradually push yourself to read faster by moving the pointer ahead of where your eyes are, encouraging your eyes to move a bit faster than your normal pace.

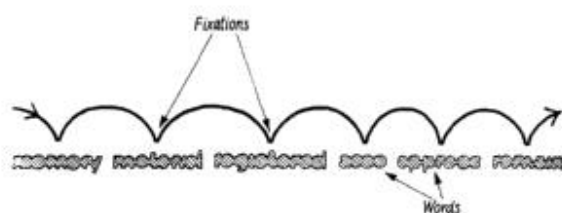


Fig. 4a Diagram of the eye's basic progression while reading. See page 37.

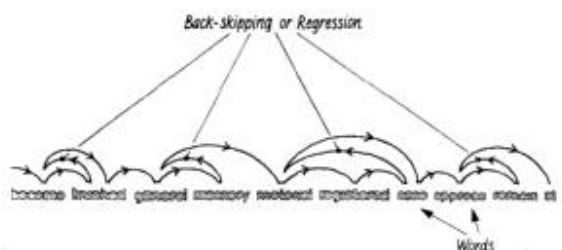


Fig. 4b Diagram of a poor reader's eye movements. See opposite.

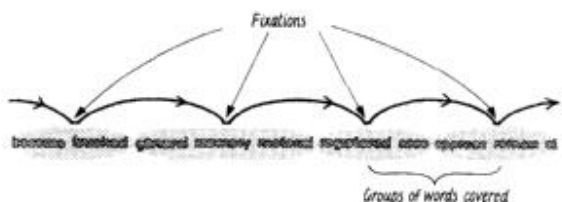


Fig. 4c Diagram of a good reader's eye movements. See opposite.

Diagram of reader's eye movements whilst reading (Buzan, 1997, p. 39).

Expanding your visual field, by taking in bigger chunks of words at a time.

The next step to increasing your reading speed is to see words in groups. Clark (1989) suggests you “do surgery on the bookmark. Cut a hole in the centre of the bookmark; make that hole 1 line high and about three words long, just measure an average page in a text book for height and length. Then, when you read, place the hole in the bookmark over the words you are reading and move the bookmark from left to right as you read the line, then down to the beginning of the next line. This should help you to focus on groups of three words at a time, rather than one word at a time and should automatically shorten the lines for you so that you don't feel pushed to try for a whole line at a time until you are ready. You can cut gradually bigger holes in your bookmark to adjust your ability to its maximum”.

If you have trouble with grouping words check to see if you are sub-vocalising. That is reading word by word because you are reading with your lips instead of your eyes. Put your finger on your lips as you read -- if your lips move, you are sub-vocalising. Also, listen to your thoughts as you read, can you "hear" each word articulated rather than seeing pictures? If you do find you are sub-vocalising, break the habit by keeping a finger on your lips whenever you read. Do this for three weeks and that should break the habit.

The Human Eye (Buzan, 1997, p. 74-77)

- Each eye contains 130 million light receivers. Each light receiver can take in at least five photons (bundles of light energy) per second.
- The eyes distinguish between over ten million different colours.
- Acting in harmony, your super light-receivers can decode, in less than a second, a scene containing billions of pieces of information, with super-photographic accuracy.
- The photographic imaging capacity of the human eye is thousands of times more sophisticated than the most advanced cameras.
- The Cerne Laboratory in Switzerland has estimated that it would cost US\$68 million to build a machine that could duplicate the incredible sophistication of the eyes. It would be immobile and nearly the size of a house.

Quick Experiment:

Taking any text book, point to a word in the middle of the page. Keeping your eyes focused on the word, notice what else you can ‘see’ on the page.

Peripheral vision

“When you drive a car you focus on the road, but you are also taking in what is around you. This is because you are using your peripheral vision. This is because even though your eyes are focused on one object, they are still able to take in a wealth of information around the object” (Townsend, 1996, p. 36).

“Peripheral vision is the way we normally use our eyes all day. Our eyes therefore find it very tiring to narrow the focus to individual words for any length of time. You will read much more efficiently when you learn to loosen up the eyes when you are reading” (Townsend, 1996, p. 36).

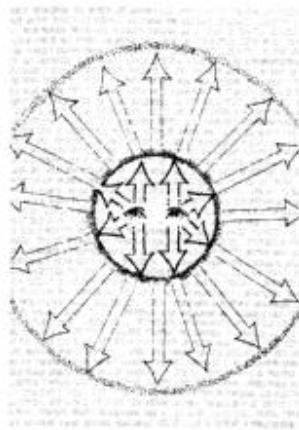


Fig. 9 Fields of vision. The inner circled area shows the area of clear vision available to the speed reader when the eye/brain system is used properly. The outer circle shows the peripheral vision also available.

Diagram: Fields of vision. The inner circled area shows the area of clear vision available to the speed reader when the eye/brain system is used properly. The outer circle shows the area of peripheral vision also available (Buzan, 1997, p.77).

Did you know?: Clear vision has only 20% of the eye/brain system devoted to it, while the peripheral system has 80% (Buzan 1997, p. 75).

Following at the end of this document are some diagrams to give you an idea of how good readers move their eyes. Experiment with each movement until you find one which you prefer. Adopt and practice this eye movement each time you read.

Next week: Your Amazing Brain. From now on, read with your brain as your central focus of attention, and not your eyes. “Your eyes are a million-faceted puppet; your brain the master puppeteer” (Buzan, 1999, p. 76).

If you can read 1000wpm and above, add your reading speed to your resume or CV.

References

- Buzan, T. (1997). *The speed reading book*. London: BBC Books.
- Clarke, C.S. (1989). *Article: Double your reading speed now*. Retrieved March 7, 2005, from <http://www.superperformance.com/double.html>.
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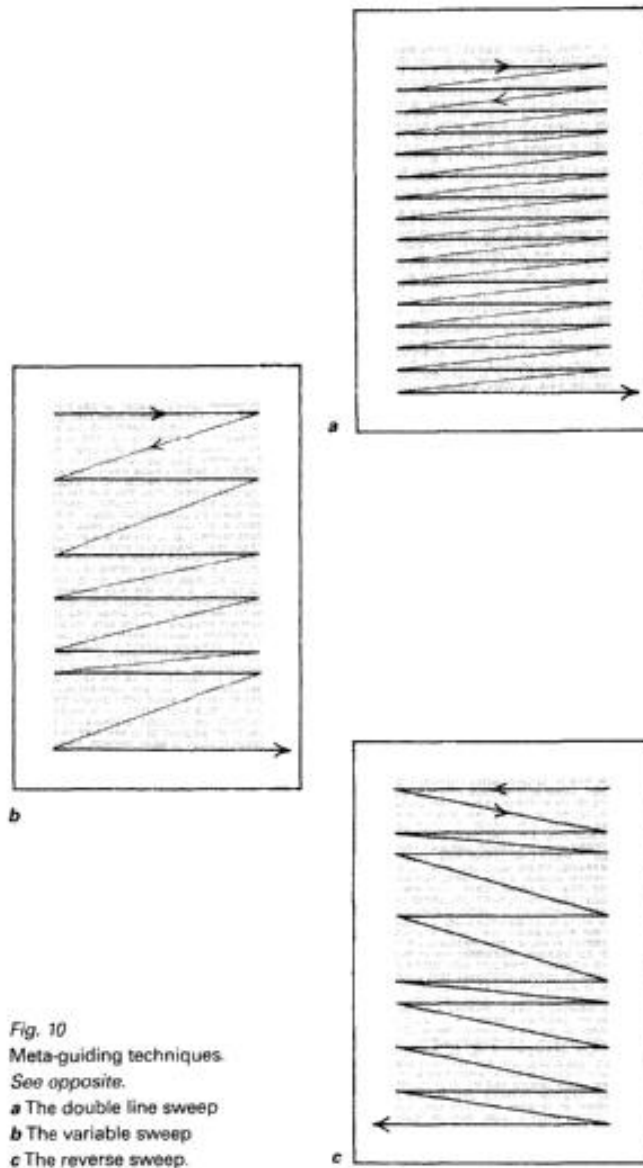


Fig. 10
Meta-guiding techniques.
See opposite.
a The double line sweep
b The variable sweep
c The reverse sweep.

Diagrams of Meta-guide techniques (Buzan, 1997, p.80).

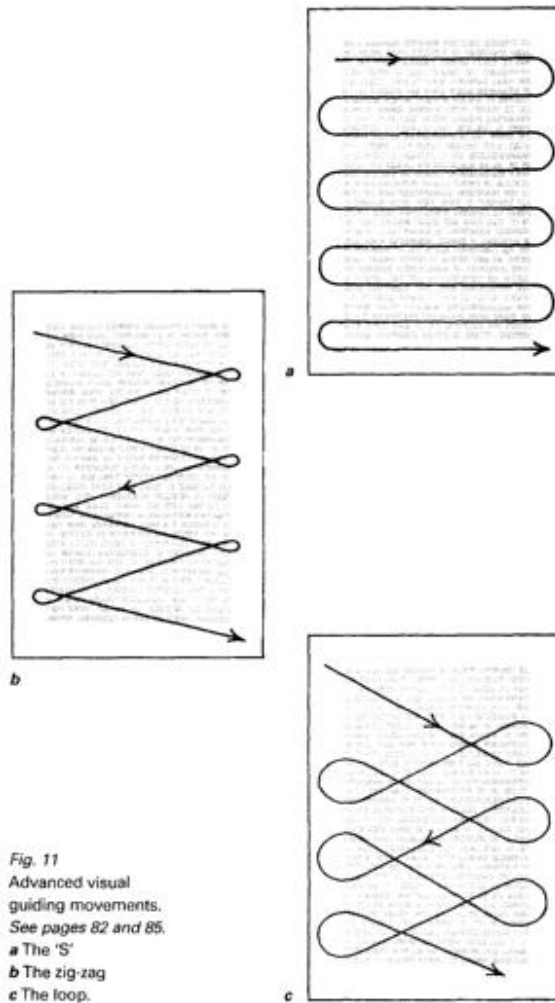


Fig. 11
Advanced visual
guiding movements.
See pages 82 and 85.
a The 'S'
b The zig-zag
c The loop.

Diagrams of Meta-guide techniques (Buzan, 1997, p.83.

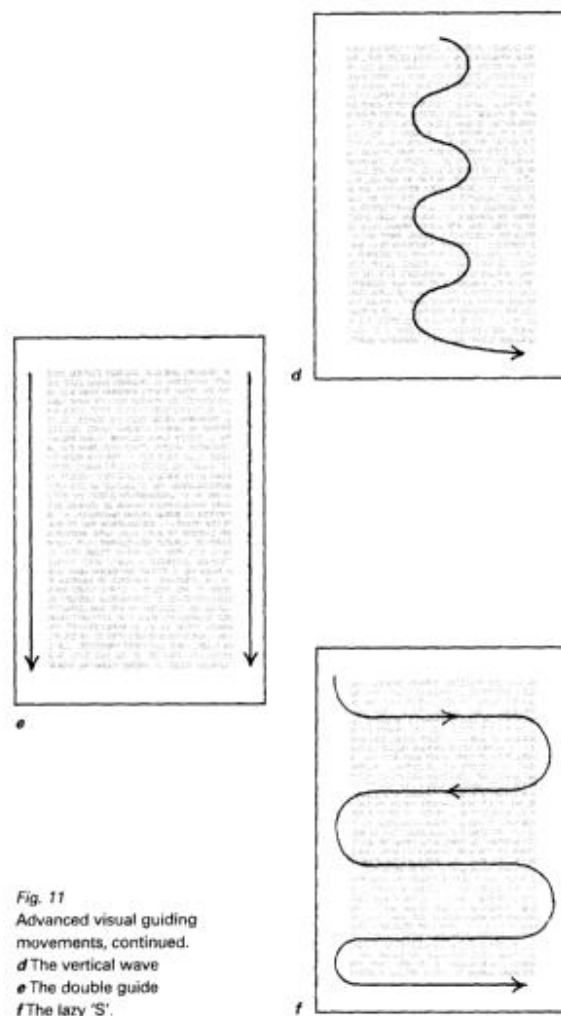


Fig. 11
Advanced visual guiding
movements, continued.
d The vertical wave
e The double guide
f The lazy 'S'.

Diagrams of Meta-guide techniques (Buzan, 1997, p.84.