



Speed Reading Training



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1. Introduction

We love to read!
And with information technology of modern days there is more to read and learn than ever!
We are bombarded by with emails, blogs, news and phone alerts

Unfortunately we have a limited amount of time and a short attention spans to absorb all the information we are interested in. How can we do it then?

One of the best things you can develop is the ability to read faster and efficiently. To do this you must develop certain skills that will allow you to read faster while maximizing your comprehension levels.

By completing this **Speed Reading Training** session, you will be able to improve your reading and accomplish more within the same time.

In this training you will be using speed-reading techniques to increase your speed and comprehension while learning key strategies and knowing when you can apply them .

2. Speed Reading

Our minds can absorb written words much more efficiently than we tend to give them credit for. When we read, we often **sub-vocalize**, which means we say the words aloud in our heads. The mind “hears” the words rather than sees them, and this limits our reading speed to how quickly we can “talk to ourselves.”

Many of us read and process one word at a time. This, again, holds us back. Our minds are perfectly capable of processing information more quickly by clumping groups of words together, and by comprehending the whole lot at once.

Have you come across the following text before?

Aoccdrnig to a rscheearchr at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno’t mtaetr in waht oerdr the ltteres in a wrod are, the olny iproamtnt tihng is taht the frsit and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it whotuit a pboerim. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Azanmig huh? Yaeh and I awlyas tghuhot slpeling was ipmorantt!

It demonstrates how the mind sees words as a whole, rather than as individual letters. What speed readers have discovered is that the mind can see groups of words as a whole as well.

This process is called **chunking**. It is a key skill that helps improve your reading speed and your comprehension.

To master chunking, you must defeat sub-vocalization, because you can only pronounce one word at a time in your mind. When you gain control of your inner voice, you will see words in chunks and focus on the ones that carry the most meaning.

Let’s practice these techniques.

Action:

Use your PDF viewer's scroll function, or print out this workbook and use a piece of paper to cover the list of words below. Scroll, or pull the paper down the list and read the words as quickly as you can without saying them in your head. A handy distraction is to count in your head, or repeat a sound like "oo" or "ee" over and over again.

One-Word List

Linguist
Synonymously
Cumulative
Epitomized
Hubris
Benignly
Paradoxically

How did you do? Were you able to silence the voice in your head?

Let's try the same exercise using the above words in chunks of three. This will help you avoid sub-vocalizing, as you can't say three words at once!

Pay attention to your eyes this time. Move them smoothly across and down the list rather than slowing your pace to read each word.

Action:

Cover the three-word phrases below, and then quickly scroll down and read them as quickly as you can.

Three-Word Phrases

an armchair linguist
interpret it synonymously
cumulative stock returns
who epitomized humility
antithesis of hubris
you benignly slip
openness and paradoxically

Were you able to keep the voice in your head quiet?

Let's try another list of three-word phrases:

erupt into laughter
ancillary definition includes
described as modest
characteristics that distinguished
by walking around
dynamic elevator speech
but without arrogance

How did that go? Take a moment to think about what tactics are working for you.

We're going to try five-word phrases next. As the chunks get longer, it is important that you keep your head centered and only move your eyes. If you try to read too quickly, you will hurt your neck. Make sure to control your sub-vocalization as well.

Use your natural eye span to see the chunks of words. Your peripheral vision is useful too because – remember – you are trying not to move your head. Look slightly above the line of print, and let your eyes "float" down the page. Try to read the lines, not each letter and word.

Action:

Try the following speed-reading exercises. Scroll quickly down the five-word phrases, and challenge yourself to read as quickly as you did with the shorter ones. Remember, keep your head still!

Five-Word Phrases

are seldom in neutral gear
dictionary defines humility as modesty
superb results but shun public
who espouses two leadership attributes
derailment of some corporate heroes
without drawing attention to themselves
curiosity over protecting our point

Action:

Try it again with the next list of five-word phrases. See if you can scroll faster than last time.

shifting the focus away from
the more they have accomplished
True merit, like a river
a leader who practices humility
space of the beginner's mind
circumstances don't lead you to
zeal to impose your point

Are you feeling more confident with your ability to read quickly? Have you started to see the five words together as one unit?

Action:

Below is another list to practice with. Scroll quicker than you feel comfortable with and see how you do.

it enhances one's self-confidence
leaders on this key attribute
just stop talking and allow
intentions of humility fly out
We move away from pushing
choose open-mindedness and curiosity
I came across this reference

If you're feeling ambitious, you can now progress to phrases of seven (plus) words. Remind yourself not to sub-vocalize, remember to look for chunks of words and not at each one individually, and try to keep your head steady.

Now we've moved onto longer phrases, another habit to watch out for is **regression**. This is when you skip back to something you've just read. Don't do it! It disrupts the flow of your reading and actually decreases comprehension. Force yourself to keep moving forward.

Action:

Below is a list of seven- to nine-word phrases or sentences. Scroll quickly down the list, chunk the words into groups, and focus on using your eyes to scan smoothly across and down the page.

Seven- to Nine-Word Phrases

Here are a few suggestions on practicing humility.

We move away from pushing into allowing
on a Friday night in an empty office

Those who achieve the most brag the least,
lack of aggressiveness in the pursuit of achievement

They will create superb results but shun public adulation

Having a lowly opinion of oneself, meekness

Here's another list to try:

An example of such a leader who epitomized humility

Being an armchair linguist, this factoid naturally stayed

Some words have different effects on different people.

The word "humility" first struck me in the context

Among the many characteristics that distinguished these companies

We spend more time in that wonderful space

You've now practiced the following speed-reading techniques:

- Limiting sub-vocalization.
- Chunking words together.
- Keeping your head steady.
- Scanning your eyes smoothly across and down the page.
- Avoiding regression.

It's now time to put them together and read a few paragraphs of material to test your comprehension. Scroll down, or use your piece of paper to reveal the text, as you read. With each paragraph, move faster down the page.

Remember the techniques you've been using. Pay particular attention to avoiding rereading sentences. Keep your eyes moving across and down the page at all times.

Action:

Read the passage on the next page and answer the questions on the page after.

Note:

Although we're practicing speed reading here, don't sacrifice comprehension for speed!

Practice Passage

Many years ago, one of my university professors mentioned that “windowsill” was voted the most beautiful word in the English language. Being an armchair linguist, this factoid naturally stayed with me. Words have enormous power. They can make us erupt into laughter or bring tears to our eyes. They can influence, inspire, manipulate, and shock. They can build and destroy. Some words have different effects on different people. One such word is “humility.” It is one of those words that are seldom in neutral gear. Some, like me, love the word and all it stands for. Some almost fear it and interpret it synonymously with lack of self-confidence or timidity.

The dictionary defines humility as modesty, lacking pretense, and not believing that you are superior to others. An ancillary definition includes: “Having a lowly opinion of oneself, meekness.” The word “humility” first struck me in the context of leadership when Jim Collins mentioned it in his seminal work, “Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don’t.” In this book, Collins examined companies that went from good to great by sustaining 15-year cumulative stock returns at or below the general stock market, and after a transition point, cumulative returns at least three times the market over the next 15 years.

Among the many characteristics that distinguished these companies from others was that they all had a Level 5 leader. Level 5 leaders direct their ego away from themselves to the larger goal of leading their company to greatness. These leaders are a complex, paradoxical mix of intense professional will and extreme personal humility. They create superb results but shun public adulation, and are never boastful. They are described as modest. An example of such a leader who epitomized humility is David Packard, the co-founder of Hewlett-Packard, who, in Jim Collins’ words, defined himself as a HP man first and a CEO second. He was a man of the people, practicing management by walking around. Shunning all manner of publicity, Packard is quoted as saying: “You shouldn’t gloat about anything you’ve done; you ought to keep going and find something better to do.”

Another great leader is Patrick Daniel, CEO of North American energy and pipeline company Enbridge, who espouses two leadership attributes: determination to create results, and humility, shifting the focus away from himself and continually recognizing the contributions of others. “I have learned through the lives of great leaders,” he said, “that greatness comes from humility and being, at times, self-effacing.”

Clearly these leaders, and many others like them, don’t espouse the meaning of humility as “meek.” On the contrary, it is a source of their strength. But the notion of being self-effacing is one that we struggle with in our competitive culture, prescribing that we take every opportunity to toot our own horn, and that we don’t dare leave the house without our dynamic elevator speech all rehearsed.

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Action:

Answer the following questions:

What word was voted the most beautiful in the English language?
What did Jim Collins use as his benchmark to determine if a company went from good to great?
Who was quoted as saying, "You shouldn't gloat about anything you've done; you ought to keep going and find something better to do?"

The answers are given on page 19.

3. Reading Strategies

Aside from reading more quickly, you can improve your efficiency by reading smarter. This means knowing when to read in depth, when to skim, and when to discard.

Due to the sheer volume, you can't possibly read all of the information that crosses your path each day. And some material shouldn't be speed read either. For example, you will probably need to read complex, important documents – such as contracts – word by word, for maximum understanding and retention. But that article about a new product your team member emailed you earlier can probably be skimmed for highlights, and then filed away for future reference.

Here are some common reading strategies for different types of material:

Reading the table of contents and introduction – Book or article titles can be misleading, and even summaries are not always accurate. By reading the table of contents and introduction, you can often decide whether information is worth reading. The introduction indicates who the material is targeted at, and the chapter headings give you a good idea of the general content. Skim for key words and phrases to decide whether the material meets your needs.

Skimming the text for key ideas – You can often pick up the main ideas of the text quickly if you scan it for key words and phrases.

Reading thoroughly – Technical information usually needs to be read thoroughly. Even so, speed-reading techniques allow you to comprehend the material just as well, so long as you don't read so fast that you miss important information.

Reading actively – This is the method you use to understand details and maximize retention. You probably practiced active reading at school – it involves highlighting important points and making short notes in the page margins. Your mind remembers the things you highlighted, which makes it is easy to review the material later.

Creating notes and glossaries – This is a form of active reading. Here, you make detailed notes on a separate piece of paper, including a definition of terms. People often use this method when studying, as well as for keeping notes for future reference.

Reading newspapers and magazines – The information in these publications varies widely. Skim the table of contents or section guide and decide if articles are relevant. Then, when you find a useful article, quickly scan the introduction and determine if it's a news, opinion or feature article. A news article has its most important information at the beginning, whereas the introduction and summary are the important sections in an opinion piece. In contrast, the main ideas within a feature article are presented in its body.

The key to reading smarter is to determine how much depth to go into. There is no point in spending a lot of time on an article that has just one main point. Likewise, you don't want to rush through a report that has detailed information that you need to know.

Action:

Consider the scenarios, below, and select which reading strategy you would use from the list in the right-hand column.

Scenario	Reading Strategies	✓
Your boss asks you to review a book on project management. He thinks it might be a good resource for trainees and people who are new to the discipline. As you are an experienced project manager, he respects your opinion.	Intro and chapter headings. Skim for main ideas. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	
Your washing machine is making a funny noise when it spins out and you think it might be the belt, but you're not sure. You have a Do-It-Yourself home repair book that has a section on washing machine troubleshooting. You need to figure out what to do.	Intro and chapter headings. Skim for main ideas. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	
You pick up a book on career planning that you intend to use to help you set goals for next year.	Intro and chapter headings. Skim for main ideas. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	
You have an exam in your night-school class and you are preparing to study the course textbook.	Intro and chapter headings. Skim for main ideas. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	

You recently expressed an interest in astronomy. Your friend lent you a beginner's "Guide to the Stars" and you want to figure out if it's as interesting as you think.	Intro and chapter headings. Skim for main ideas. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	
An article in the trade press catches your eye. You wonder if it's worth reading in detail.	Introduction/abstract. Introduction and summary. Skim the body. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	
You decide you'd like to use an article as the basis for a training session you're preparing.	Introduction/abstract. Introduction and summary. Skim the body. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	
You've got some spare time while waiting for your appointment with your doctor. The latest issue of a history magazine is on the table. The cover story looks interesting, as do some of the related articles.	Table of contents. Introduction/abstract. Introduction and summary. Skim the body. Highlight and annotate.	
Your partner sends you a link to a web page with a review of the new car you are thinking of buying. You are behind schedule with your report writing, and you are meeting your spouse at the car dealership immediately after work.	List of links. Introduction and summary. Skim the body. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate.	

For recommended answers, see pages 19 and 20.

4. Reading Retention (SQ3R)

The ultimate test of your reading ability is how much you actually remember. We can fan through the pages of a 288-page book and say we speed read it but, if we can't recall more than 10 percent of it, was there any point?

Comprehension is a key part of effective reading. As you discovered in the section above, you don't have to read everything for maximum understanding. But when you choose to read material thoroughly, you should start with the aim of retaining important information.

A great technique to improve your retention of written material is called "SQ3R". It stands for:

Survey – Scan the contents, the introductions and the summaries to determine the relevance of the material.

Question – Write down your study goals or the main questions you expect to answer by reading the material.

Read – Read thoroughly through the sections that you've identified as relevant, and take notes. As you do, pay particular attention to the questions you wrote down.

Recall – When you've finished a section or chapter, recall the main points. What are the key facts that you need to remember, and how do they relate to other material you've been reading, or the knowledge you have?

Review – After finishing all the relevant material, evaluate what you've read. Reread highlighted sections, go over your notes and revise them, and talk through the contents with others. These actions help solidify the information in your mind and make it much easier for you to recall later.

Action:

Practice SQ3R by choosing a work-related book. Find one that is reasonably detailed, and that you find interesting. (If you don't have anything suitable, find one at home or borrow one to do this exercise another time.)

Write down three or four key questions you expect this material to answer for you on the next page.

Note:

This activity may span more than the hour allotted here, depending on the length of your book.

Question
1.
2.
3.
4.

Think about what you want to achieve by reading the book, and why it's worth investing time in reading it. For example, do you want to learn a new skill or top up your expertise in a certain area? Will this reading help you in your current role, or perhaps increase your chances of promotion?

Action:

Read one chapter using the SQ3R approach and use the space on the next page to make notes.

Tip:

It can help to take notes in Mind Map format while you are reading.

Notes

Action:

Use the box below to answer the following questions:

- What are the core facts from the section you just read?
- How did this information contribute to your understanding of the subject?
- Did any of your key questions get answered?

Notes

Think about what you need to do to ensure you can remember the material. Can you discuss it with someone? Is it worthwhile expanding your notes and making them available for future reference? Will you need to reread all or parts of the book to make full sense of what you read?

Action:

Write down your review actions below.

Review Actions

6. Key Learning Points

Some of the key parts of reading smarter include improving speed and efficiency, making good decisions about what to read, and understanding the extent to which you need to read it. If you read irrelevant material slowly, you'll waste your time; or if you read highly detailed information too fast, you'll miss the point. Clearly, reading quickly is not enough.

And knowing when to skim and when to slow down, take notes, and read for maximum recall is equally important. Given the amount of time we spend reading and the volume of information at our disposal, it makes good sense to assess the importance of written material before diving in.

Use the techniques and tools we've looked at to improve both the speed of your reading and the relevance of what you read. This combination will make you a smart and efficient reader – one who consumes information at an optimal rate, and then remembers it!

Answers

What word was voted the most beautiful in the English language?
Windowsill
What did Jim Collins use as his benchmark to determine if a company went from good to great?
If it sustained 15-year cumulative stock returns at or below the general stock market and, after a transition point, cumulative returns at least three times the market over the next 15 years.
Who was quoted as saying, “You shouldn’t gloat about anything you’ve done; you ought to keep going and find something better to do?”
David Packard/CEO of Hewlett-Packard (HP)

Note that the following reading strategies highlighted in the right-hand column should be treated as guidelines only. The strategy you choose when reading new material is in many ways subjective, and what works for one person might not work for another.

Scenario	Reading Strategies	✓
Your boss asks you to review a book on project management. He thinks it might be a good resource for trainees and people who are new to the discipline. As you are an experienced project manager, he respects your opinion.	Intro and chapter headings. Skim for main ideas. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	✓ ✓
Your washing machine is making a funny noise when it spins out and you think it might be the belt, but you’re not sure. You have a Do-It-Yourself home repair book that has a section on washing machine troubleshooting. You need to figure out what to do.	Intro and chapter headings. Skim for main ideas. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	✓ ✓

You pick up a book on career planning that you intend to use to help you set goals for next year.	Intro and chapter headings. Skim for main ideas. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	✓ ✓
You have an exam in your night-school class and you are preparing to study the course textbook.	Intro and chapter headings. Skim for main ideas. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	✓ ✓
You recently expressed an interest in astronomy. Your friend lent you a beginner's "Guide to the Stars" and you want to figure out if it's as interesting as you think.	Intro and chapter headings. Skim for main ideas. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	✓
An article in the trade press catches your eye. You wonder if it's worth reading in detail.	Introduction/abstract. Introduction and summary. Skim the body. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	✓ ✓
You decide you'd like to use an article as the basis for a training session you're preparing.	Introduction/abstract. Introduction and summary. Skim the body. Highlight and annotate. Notes and glossaries.	✓ ✓
You've got some spare time while waiting for your appointment with your doctor. The latest issue of a history magazine is on the table. The cover story looks interesting, as do some of the related articles.	Table of contents. Introduction/abstract. Introduction and summary. Skim the body. Highlight and annotate.	✓ ✓
Your partner sends you a link to a web page with a review of the new car you are thinking of buying. You are behind schedule with your report writing and you are meeting your spouse at the car dealership immediately after work.	List of links. Introduction and summary. Skim the body. Read thoroughly. Highlight and annotate.	✓ ✓