

Activity: Practice Your Pace

What is the right pace? According to the National Center for Voice and Speech, the average rate for English speakers in the United States is about 150 words per minute.

To test this for yourself, set a timer for one minute and then read the following passage (from Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*) out loud:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.

We had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way— in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

There were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a plain face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France.

(159 words)