

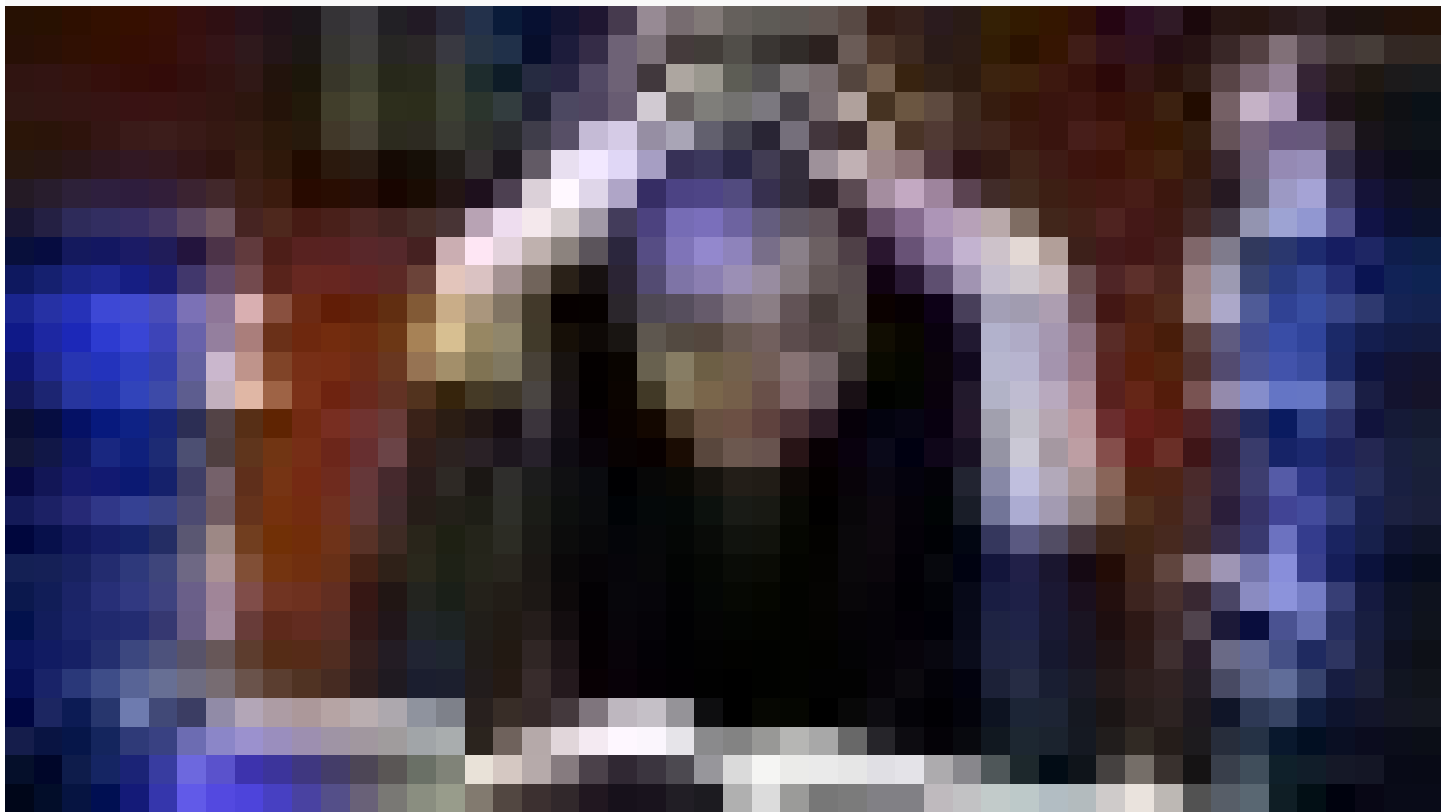
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THE FAST AND INFURIATING

## Speed-reading apps are great for speed and terrible for reading, study finds

By [Rachel Feltman](#) | April 24, 2014



You'll get through them all, but won't remember a darn thing. (Flickr/UGL\_UIUC)

Speed reading apps [like Spritz](#) are a [nifty way to plow through text](#) at a breakneck pace, but they're not perfect. Such apps [might rob you](#) of your comprehension, according to [new research](#) (paywall).

In a study by [University of California-San Diego's Rayner Eyetracking Lab](#), psychologists replicated what they saw as Spritz's biggest flaw. The app flashes words one by one, centered on the same point. This, the app's creators say, allows



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But post-doctoral psychology researcher [Elizabeth Schotter](#) and her colleagues say this system could [pose a problem for readers](#). When an app displays one word at a time (and then takes it away), readers can't reread text as they move on to the following word. These quick, unconscious re-readings—called “regressions”—help you understand text, the psychologists wrote.

To be fair, the study participants didn't use an app like Spritz in the lab. Instead, researchers let them read a sentence normally, but sometimes hid words as soon as readers looked to the next one. Sure enough, reading comprehension went down when readers couldn't look back to a previous word for clarification.

So no, you shouldn't try to read *War and Peace* at 500 words per minute. But Spritz is [still a great idea for smartwatches](#): Tiny screens (like the sleek [Samsung Gear Fit](#), for example) will need a text-reading solution. For text messages and simple emails, a speed reader shouldn't cause a comprehension problem, even if more nuanced language might be better absorbed the traditional way.

