

Aptitude Advanced

How to improve Reading Speed

eBook 02

Table of Contents

Chapter No.	Topic	Pg. No.
1	Speed Reading Techniques	10
	1.1 Is speed Important	
	1.2 Check your speed	
	1.3 Techniques to improve your speed	
2	Reading Better and Faster	15
	2.1 Six Canons of Better and Faster Comprehension	
	2.2 10 Tips that form The Basis of Reading	

Chapter 1: Speed Reading Technique

1.1 Is speed important?

Speed of reading differs from person to person. What's important is a right balance of speed with comprehension. If you don't understand what you read than you are just wasting your time. Also, it shouldn't be too slow. Because when you read slowly it might happen that while reading some other simultaneous thoughts are flashing in front of you.

1.2 Check your speed

To start with, let us get an idea of your reading speed. Please time yourself on the passage below and find out how much time you took to read it.

PASSAGE

Write your start time _____

It has been a wonderful year for Hindi movies - suddenly, everybody is talking about the need for something called a 'script'. Even the producer who would spend Rs 30 lakh on one song and would gladly spend another Rs 2 crore on action sequences but would grudge paying the writer even Rs 2 lakhs, has begun to realise that great song

sequences, great music, great action and even great stars cannot save his film, if it does not contain a 'story'.

I think it was Hitchcock who, in his inimitable style, talked about three most important elements necessary to make a successful movie: script, script and script! And it was none other than Steven Spielberg who acknowledged that if the writers didn't write, everybody in Hollywood would be out of their jobs. And Robert Evans, the producer of such blockbusters as "The Godfather" would rather have the next five commitments from Robert Towne, (the legendary Hollywood script doctor who wrote 'Chinatown', arguably the greatest American screenplay) than the next five commitments from Robert Redford. Now compare this with the status of Bollywood writers. Where does a Bollywood writer stand today? Answers : Fifth from the left in the fourth row in any 'mahurat' photograph; somewhere below the knee of the star, sucking up to him, narrating a *dhansu* introduction scene just right for his ego; begging for his 50 per cent balance remuneration from a producer who claims to have suddenly gone bankrupt; begging the director not to steal his credit; hustling a successful director in the corridor of a 5-star hotel to narrate him six stories in five minutes flat!

Bollywood, which produces the maximum number of films in the world has may be, three thousand writers registered with its Film Writers Association out of which barely a dozen get regular work, and not more than six are actually busy. The busiest, however, are not even members of the Film Writers Association - Ms Laser Disc and Mr VCR Swamy. Now compare this to Hollywood where every University has a film course, every city has film schools and dozens of regular script workshops organised to teach script writing, which produce, on an average, may be three thousand writers every year!

So is it a wonder that even the biggest blockbuster of the year can be best remembered only for its tolerable music and interior decoration? Is it a wonder that the box office has proved to be the graveyard of most visual stylists? Is it a wonder that the audience seems to have graduated but the film makers are still stuck in the fourth grade? Is it a wonder that the most 'agonising' moral choice our heroes are burdened with is whether to pick up an AK-47 or an AK-56? And what about dilemmas? Well, there is no dilemma too big for a portable stereo and a Ganesha to solve!

Whatever ails Hindi movies, I hope it gets worse. Because things change only when they reach the extreme water turns to steam only at 100 degree C, not even at 99.99 degree C. And because I love Hindi movies, because I love being a writer of Hindi films, because I believe a writer is the first star of a film, not its last priority.

Stop: Now note down the time you took to read the passage

Refer to the table below to calculate your reading speed in words per minute (WPM):

Time	WPM	Time	WPM	Time	WPM
30 s	1090	2 min 40 s	204	4 min 40 s	117
45 s	727	2 min 50 s	192	4 min 50 s	113
1 min	545	3 min	182	5 min	109
1 min 10 s	467	3 min 10 s	172	5 min 10 s	105
1 min 20 s	409	3 min 20 s	164	5 min 20 s	102

1 min 30 s	363	3 min 30 s	156	5 min 30 s	99
1 min 40 s	327	3 min 40 s	149	5 min 40 s	96
1 min 50 s	297	3 min 50 s	142	5 min 50 s	93
2 min	273	4 min	136	6 min	91
2 min 10 s	252	4 min 10 s	131	6 min 10 s	88
2 min 20 s	234	4 min 20 s	126	6 min 20 s	86
2 min 30 s	218	4 min 30 s	121	6 min 30 s	84

Now that you have a benchmark, make it a point to calculate your reading speed by approximating the number of words and dividing it by the time taken in minutes to read the passage. This passage had 545 words in all.

1.3 Techniques to improve reading speed

Requirement:

1. Book to read
2. Watch/ Stop clock
3. Pen/ pencil
4. Your current speed of reading
5. Your Approach to the Course:

- Attitude—having a positive outlook, trust, and a willing suspension of disbelief
- Motivation —keeping your goals in mind and being disciplined with practice even if you do not experience immediate results.

Technique 1: Trackers and Pacers

Why use this Method: To avoid regression i.e. to read the lines by going back every time. The duration of fixations can be minimized by using a tracker and pacer.

Holding the pen in your dominant hand, you will underline each line (with the cap on), keeping your eye fixation above the tip of the pen.

This will not only serve as a tracker, but it will also serve as a pacer for maintaining consistent speed and decreasing fixation duration.

Requirements

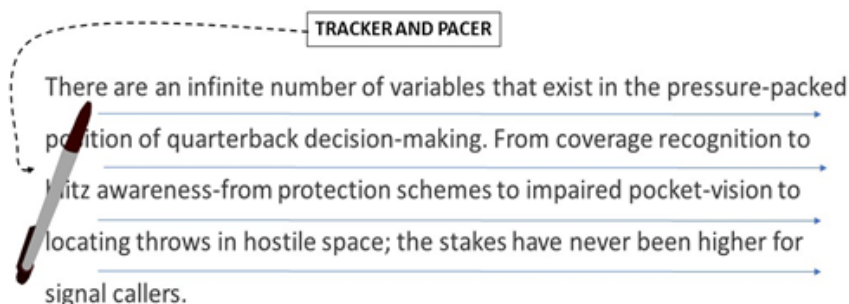
You will need: a book of 200+ pages that can lay flat when open, a pen, and a timer (a stop watch with alarm is ideal). You should complete the 20 minutes of exercises in one session

Technique for using Tracker and Pacer

1) Step 1 (Practise for 2 minutes)

A. Practice using the pen as a tracker and pacer.

- B. Underline each line, focusing above the tip of the pen.
- C. Do not concern yourself with comprehension.
- D. Keep each line to a maximum of one second, and increase the speed with each subsequent page. Read, but under no circumstances should you take longer than one second per line.



Step 2: Build Speed (3 minutes):

- A. Repeat the technique, keeping each line to no more than one-half second (two lines for a single second).
- B. Some will comprehend nothing, which is to be expected. Don't worry.
- C. Maintain speed and technique-you are conditioning your perceptual reflexes, and this is a speed exercise designed to facilitate adaptations in your system.
- D. Do not decrease speed. One-half second per line for three minutes; focus above the pen and concentrate on

technique with speed. Focus on the exercise, and do not daydream.

Step 3: Practise for 20 minutes

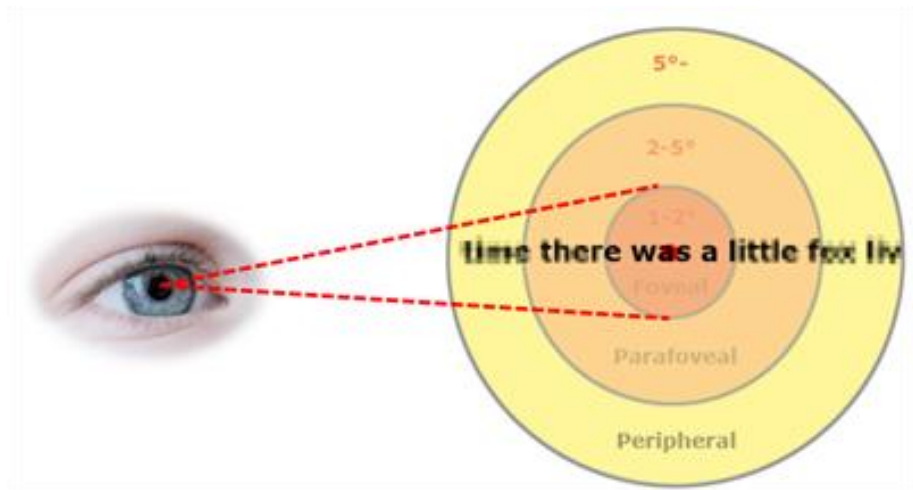
Step 4: Now check your speed.

Technique 2: Perceptual Expansion

Why use this method

According to Tim Ferriss, an average reader who reads from the 1st word to the last word of each line, are only using 50% of their peripheral vision.


The way to improve your peripheral vision is what Ferriss calls Perceptual Expansion.



Training peripheral vision to register more effectively can increase reading speed over untrained readers who use up to one-half of their peripheral field on margins by moving from first word to last, spending 25-50 percent of their time “reading” margins with no content. This concept is easy to implement and combine with the tracking and pacing you’ve already practiced.

To illustrate, let us take the hypothetical one line:

“Once upon a time, students enjoyed reading four hours a day.”



If you were able to begin your reading at “time” and finish the line at “four,” you would eliminate 6 of 11 words, more than doubling your reading speed.

We’ll break down this reading exercise in 2 simple steps:

Step 1: Technique (one minute):

- a. Use the pen to track and pace at a consistent speed of one line per second. Begin one word in from the first word of each line, and end one word in from the last word.
- b. Do not concern yourself with comprehension.

- c. Keep each line to a maximum of one second, and increase the speed with each subsequent page.
- d. Read, but under no circumstances should you take longer than one second per line.

Step 2: Technique (one minute):

- a. Use the pen to track and pace at a consistent speed of one line per second.
- b. Begin two words in from the first word of each line, and end two words in from the last word.

Step 3: Speed (three minutes):

Begin at least three words in from the first word of each line, and end three words in from the last word. Repeat the technique, keeping each line to no more than one-half second .

Note: Some will comprehend nothing, which is to be expected. Maintain speed and technique-you are conditioning your perceptual reflexes, and this is a speed exercise designed to facilitate adaptations in your system. Do not decrease speed. One-half second per line for three minutes; focus above the pen and concentrate on technique with speed. Focus on the exercise, and do not daydream.

Step 4: Calculate New WPM Reading Speed

Mark your first line and read with a timer for one minute exactly. Read at your fastest comprehension rate.

Reading Better and Faster

5.1 Six Canons of Better and Faster Comprehension

To achieve your goal of faster reading speed and understanding, pay close attention to these important rules:

1. Read More and More

You will have to read much, much more than you are now doing. If you are a slow reader, you most likely go through the daily papers and light magazines. You read whenever you happen to have a few spare minutes, you read merely to pass time. Or perhaps you hardly ever read at all unless you must.

From now on, you must take time for reading. Speed can be developed into a permanent habit only if you do what naturally fast and skillful readers have always done, from childhood on: read a lot. That means at least a full book every week. Unless you develop the habit of reading for

two hours or more at a stretch, several stretches every week, don't expect ever to become an efficient reader.

2. Learn to Read for Main Ideas

Stop wasting time and effort on details. When you read, push through efficiently for quick recognition of the main idea that the details support and illustrate; be more interested in the writer's basic thinking than in minor points.

When you read, be intent on getting the theme, the broad ideas, and the framework on which the author has built the book. Don't let an occasional perplexing paragraph slow you down. Keep speeding through. As the complete picture is filled in by rapid overall reading, the few puzzling details will either turn out to be unimportant or will be cleared as you move along.

When you read a short story or a novel, follow the thread of the plot, consciously look for and find the "conflict" skim whenever you feel impelled to – don't meander in from word to word and sentence to sentence.

3. Challenge Your Comprehension

Fast readers are good readers. They're fast because they have learned to understand print quickly, and they understand quickly because they give themselves constant practice in understanding. To this end, they read challenging material: and you must do the same. Does a novel sound deep? Does a book of nonfiction seem difficult? Does an article in a magazine look as if it will require more thinking than you feel prepared to do? Then that's the type of reading that will give you the most valuable training.

You will never become a better reader by limiting yourself to easy reading – you cannot grow intellectually by pampering yourself. Ask yourself: “Do I know more about myself and the rest of world, as a result of my reading, than I did in the past?” If your honest answer is no, then you should get started on a more challenging type of reading.

4. Budget Your Time

Say to yourself: “I have five chapters in sociology, anthropology, psychology (or whatever) to read by next

week". And then give yourself a limited, specific time in which to complete the assignment: for example, three chapters tonight, in two hours (allowing time for underlining, writing in the margin, taking notes etc.) and two chapters tomorrow night, in an hour and a half. Good readers always have a feeling of going fast, for they have developed fast habits, indeed, adults and college students who have trained themselves to read rapidly would find their original slow pace uncomfortable and unpleasant.

5. Pace Yourself

When you start a new book, spend the initial 15 minutes in understanding while reading. Count the number of pages you've finished in that time, multiply by 4, and you will have your potential speed for that book in pages per hour. (Of course some books are slower reading than others - it takes more time to cover 50 pages in a college text than in a light novel. The more solidity packed in the ideas there on a page, the more time it will take to cover that page.)

Keep to the rate you've set for yourself in pages per hour. In this way, you will learn to devise personal tricks that will

speed you up and that will, at the same time, sharpen your comprehension skill. But you must practice every day or nearly every day, if you wish to make high speed natural and automatic, if you wish to become efficient in rapid comprehension.

6. Develop Habits of Immediate Concentration

Nothing makes concentration so easy, so immediate, as the technique of sweeping through material purposefully looking for main ideas and broad concepts. All people of normal intelligence can concentrate when they read, but slow readers put themselves at a disadvantage.

If, through laziness, you read at a slower rate than the rate at which you are able to comprehend, there is great temptation for your mind to wander. The brightest persons in a class are not always the best students. If the work is too easy for them, they become bored, they think of more interesting things, they daydream, they stop paying attention. This analogy explains why a slower reader picks up a book or a magazine, goes through a few pages, and finding that attention is wandering, puts it down and turns to something else.

By reading always at your top comprehension speed, you constantly challenge your understanding, you stimulate

your mind, and you get involved in the author's thoughts without half trying.

And, as an added dividend, you soon find that the increased concentration you get from fast, aggressive reading sharpens your understanding and enjoyment, for every distracting thought is pushed out of your mind. But reading about the principles of efficient and rapid comprehension is not going to make you faster or better reader. Only putting those principles into practice, over a period of time, can do that for you.

How long will it take? That depends on what sort of person you are and how assiduously you apply yourself under prime conditions, habits of speed and aggressive comprehension can become automatic after a few months of daily, or almost daily, practice. People have practically proved it year after year.

The important thing is that you now realize that you have the ability to read faster than you generally do.

Urgency is the name of the game

If you read at a rate between 175-250 WPM, you may have formed habits of wandering through print in a random, purposeless way, letting words and ideas wash over you, making no demands on what you are reading – *irrespective of the material type.*

It is possible, with such habits, that you permit yourself the luxury of being distracted by your surroundings; you are in no hurry to get anywhere because you have no awareness of where you wish to go; and you often passively - even blankly - follow words, your mind only partial engaged, instead of aggressively *asking question and demanding answers.*

You are, in brief, *uncommitted and over relaxed when you read.* As a result, you rarely stay with a book for more than 30-60 minutes at a time, for passivity leads to boredom, and boredom is so unpleasant that it is natural to avoid it. Take the first step toward learning to attack all your reading, of whatever purpose, with a sense of urgency.

Exercises in accurate response

Have a pen or pencil at hand for ticking options. Set your stopwatch or timer, for exactly 1/2 minute! In the short period of 90 seconds, you are to read each selection and then mark five statements about it - true or false.

Do the true – false test without referring again to what you have read. Do not guess. If you cannot decide, leave the answer blank. Note that you are to try to finish both the selections and the test in 90 seconds or less.

5.2 10 Tips that form the Basis of Reading

Reading of all types opens up vistas of knowledge at any level. A child in the nursery learns about the magic of the sky, sun and the stars by visual and actual reading. As we grow, we learn the basics of life by reading about them. But sadly reading is not everyone's cup of tea. In this final section, we share with you a few fundamental tips to help improve your reading habits.

1. You don't need to understand each and every word.

Read little but absorb what you read. The requirement of everyone depends on their environment and level of intelligence. As long as reading material is available and it

satisfies your mind you should enjoy reading and grasp the main subject. The rest will automatically fall into place. The point is to get the central idea, the core concept; the specifics can be given a miss.

2. Identify your purpose of reading

Many reasons can contribute to the quest for become a better reader. Why are you reading? It could be for an examination purpose, or to put an impression about the extent of your knowledge, or perhaps find a foothold amongst your peers. The main purpose for you should be accumulation of knowledge through extensive reading; there is a saying that knowledge gained can never be lost. IDENTIFY ONE PIECE OF KNOWLEDGE that you like to learn from every piece you would read.

3. What to choose for reading

Time is valuable commodity so one has to make an informed choice with respect to what one reads. Chalk out the important areas and pay full attention to them. Extra, nonsensical material should be avoided. Junk magazines and blogs can be rejected.

4. Read only the top-end material

Whatsoever you choose to read make sure it is the best. Classify all that you have selected to read and then go in only for the best.

5. Scrutinize before starting

Generally, most of us pick up a book or a magazine and judge it by its cover without going through the contents; and read the ones that appeal to us. This is a wrong method; go through the contents before beginning to read. By doing so, you will save yourself the trouble of reading grade-B material.

6. List your preferences

A person feels elated at having a pile of material to read. Prioritize the most important ones and leave the rest to the end of the pile. Having a well-organized pile would make you even more happy.

7. The environment should be conducive and pleasant

If the mind is at rest it will absorb more, and thus another important factor which helps in encouraging you to read is a pleasant and peaceful surrounding.

8. Finish what you start

Leaving an article or a book midway does not help you. If some parts are difficult go back to them again , but finish what you have started. This way you tend to exercise your brain more and attain more knowledge.

9. Maintain your focus

Focus generates interest and vice versa; if you find something interesting naturally you will retain more. Getting engrossed in the reading material will help you greatly increase your efficiency.

10. Last but not the least

Only one thing can make you better at reading: reading more!