

INCREASE SPEED AND COMPREHENSION, USING SUPER-FAST "MIND HACKS"

SPEED **READING**

HOW TO **DOUBLE (OR TRIPLE)**
YOUR READING SPEED IN JUST
1 HOUR!



JUSTIN HAMMOND

Speed Reading

***How to Double (or Triple)
Your Reading Speed
In Just 1 Hour!***

by Justin Hammond

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Introduction

I could never seem to read as fast as my best friend.

When we would spend time reading at weekends, he seemed to devour one book after another while I slowly chugged through. What took him hours to read might take me days.

I began to borrow his books rather than read my own in the misguided belief that it was his *books*, rather than his reading skills, that governed how quickly he could read. That didn't help: I read his books at my own dogged pace and concluded (falsely) that he would just always be a faster reader.

I believed this fallacy for the next 20 years. As I advanced through college, and as the length and complexity of the texts I read increased, it took me longer and longer to complete assignments. I just accepted as fact that it would take me a long time to read anything, and I spent hours every night trying to finish my work. I had falsely accepted the fact that my reading pace was fixed; I wasn't aware that it could be improved.

Yes, I genuinely believed that I was stuck with my reading speed. Even though I could read *well* – after all, I eventually received the highest English distinction at college, and shortly after wrote a series of best-selling books – I could not read *quickly*. In fact, I even attributed my excellent reading skills to the fact that “I read slowly, so that's why I catch lots of details and understand everything I read so well.” Eventually I could read and understand all kinds of literature with impressive skill. The secret I hid from all my college classmates, though, was that I was spending around twice as much time reading as they were.

Even as I completed graduate school courses, I still had no idea how students could claim they “read the book twice this week,” or “read other books by this author” in the past week. How did they do it? How did they read so fast? The only answer I could come up with was that many people were like my best friend – they were *naturally fast readers*. I, on the other hand, was a

naturally *slow* reader. And there was nothing I could do about it.

Like I said, I believed this lie for almost twenty years, until a colleague of mine introduced me to the basic concepts of speed reading. The first and most powerful lesson of speed reading is that **it is a skill to be learned – not an ability you're born with**. I couldn't believe this at first, but I was hungry to learn more.

Today I'm something of an expert on speed reading. I've studied the concept for years. I've created best-selling courses on the topic, sold online today. I coast easily through texts that years ago would have taken me weeks to read. I blitz through my emails each morning in record time. I can get through a newspaper, review business documents and blast through agreements in a matter of minutes. I save more and more time, every single day. I know the most powerful strategies behind speed reading, and I also know how to teach them. Importantly, I also know when I *shouldn't* read quickly.

I have *tripled my reading speed*, which has made an enormous difference to the way I am able to use my time. And if you follow and apply the skills in this guide, you'll find that within a very short time, your reading speed can double – *at least*.

Like me, you might have believed for a long time that you couldn't read any faster, and that you were stuck for the rest of your life at one reading pace. Or perhaps you knew you could read faster, but you believed that you would understand less. Don't worry – I've been there, and I can honestly tell you that your first step to becoming a better, faster, stronger reader is to let go of these lies. Developing your speed reading skills is entirely possible. Not only that, you can actually achieve faster reading speeds all *within just an hour*.

Read on.

Chapter 1:

What is Speed Reading?

When I was about four years old, my father gave me a hammer. It was a very small, very light hammer that was practically good for nothing, but I felt important carrying it around. If I wanted to pound a nail into a piece of wood, it took about 100 strikes with this hammer to do it. I was always amazed at the men who could do the same thing with their massive hammers in just two or three strikes.

Speed reading is kind of like using a bigger hammer. Yes, pounding away at nails with my small hammer eventually got the job done, but it took a lot of time and energy. Speed reading means that you enable yourself to complete the same reading task, but with much greater efficiency.

The art of speed reading consists of a variety of reading methods and techniques designed to get you reading faster. These methods focus on getting you to decrease the number of habits that slow you down and increase the number of habits that can speed you up. There is no single, simple approach to speed reading that fits every person. In this book, you will learn about the various techniques available and ways to practice them, and then you'll get guidance on how to select the techniques that best fit your reading patterns.

Once you're armed with the right tools, you'll be just as prepared as the capable craftsman with his fully equipped tool belt. That craftsman is ready to encounter any situation and is experienced enough to know which tools can best accomplish the job. He wasn't born knowing how to use these tools – he was trained. You too can be trained so that you know exactly how to approach any text, saving you tons of time and a mountain of energy.

What Will You Get from this Book?

Using the techniques taught in this book, you will (at least) *double your*

reading speed.

Now, before you zoom ahead and think that by just reading this your powers of speed reading will suddenly and miraculously improve beyond recognition, make sure you understand how this book is intended to work. It is written to reveal the secrets of reading that are rarely taught in schools.

These secrets cover the following main points:

- Your reading speed is hindered by certain bad habits that you may or may not be aware of. Cut these and you'll increase your speed.
- There are special reading techniques you can apply, which will help you to naturally read faster.

As the subtitle of this book makes clear, once you've drop the bad habits and applied these techniques, you will be able to double (or triple) your reading speed typically in just one hour.

Be aware: This book doesn't do the reading for you. That's where you come in!

If you're interested in doubling your reading speed, then you need to make sure that you're doing two things: 1) **APPLY** what you discover here to your own reading; 2) **PRACTICE** these reading techniques. No one ever got good at anything by just reading a book about it. Real skill and improvement come from experience.

Chapter 2:

Understanding Reading Speeds

Speed is relative, and you might think that there's no point in comparing your own reading speed to those of others (after all, there's no benefit to you in finding out someone else is faster at reading).

Yet if you compare yourself to certain reading speed standards, you'll be able to work out just what reading speeds you're potentially capable of. Imagine you're an amateur ice skater: if you look at the professional skater gliding around, you'll realise you're capable of achieving far greater speeds than at present (and you might then work towards improving your skating speeds).

The unit used for speed reading is WPM – words per minute. It literally means how many words per minute you can read. (You'll often see the same abbreviation for typists who can type a certain number of words per minute.)

How does your reading speed compare to these average speeds? [*](#)

Here are the average reading speeds of individuals in key age brackets:

<i>Age</i>	<i><u>Average Reading</u></i> <i><u>Speed</u></i>
7 years	75–115
10 years	120–160
15 years	180–220
18 years	200–250

NOTE: This chart only represents AVERAGES. Many people, experts included, claim that averages mean nothing when it comes to reading. So if you don't fit in the average, don't sweat it. No matter where you are in this table, you CAN increase your speed.

* (If you'd like to take a quick test to determine what your average reading speed is, turn to the appendix and follow the instructions for reading Passage A.)

It can be intimidating for some readers to glance at these average reading speeds and see where each person measures up. But don't worry! Your only goal is to see what is possible – not what is expected. These averages do not provide any sort of basis for making broader implications about one's reading ability, intelligence, or comprehension.

The average educated adult's reading speed is somewhere between 200 and 300 words per minute. This means that, according to the numbers, the average adult can read John Steinbeck's short novel *Of Mice and Men* – a text just shy of 30,000 words – in about two hours. However, I've never met someone who's actually read the book in this amount of time.

Why would this be? Firstly, most people don't have such levels of concentration! But, secondly, remember that averages are calculations that incorporate the reading speeds of extremely fast readers as well as extremely slow readers. As a result, they're often not great at describing what is actually realistic. While many adults read at an "average" reading speed, the truth is that many adults are slower and many adults are faster. Just keep your mind focused on the fact that whatever your reading speed is, it can easily be doubled with the right application of these skills!

Chapter 3:

Speed Reading Misconceptions & Benefits

For years, I misunderstood what speed reading was and how people achieved it. And this held me back from realizing my true reading potential. Don't let this happen to you.

Open your eyes to the absolutely amazing realities of speed reading's opportunities and the fact that doubling your reading speed could be only an hour away.

Here are some very common misconceptions about speed reading:

Misconception 1: “Some people are born with it; some aren't.” Plenty of people believe that the ability to blast through the written word is something you're either born with, or you aren't, in the same way some people are naturally more adept at sport or art.

The Truth: This is a partial misconception. Yes it's true that some people are born with the ability to read more quickly than others – in the same way that some people are born with the ability to run faster than others. But, just as it's possible to train to run faster, it's possible to train to speed read. Speed reading is a skill that is **LEARNED**. You might not have been born a quick reader, but with the right training, practice and dedication, you **CAN** double your reading speed.

Misconception 2: “I prefer to enjoy my books, not rush through them.” It makes logical sense to think that the slower the pace, the more in-depth the experience. We wouldn't want to rush through a date with a nice guy or girl – we'd want take the time to enjoy the experience. Why then should it be different with books?

The Truth: Our minds adapt very easily to the type of reading we perform. It is perfectly true that reading slowly *may* bring a more pleasurable reading

experience. However, in general, there is *no relationship* between how fast we read and how much fun it is. In fact, one could argue that doubling your reading speed will bring you *more* pleasure because you are accomplishing the same job in a shorter amount of time. Also, consider it this way: if you can't wait to discover what happens to the main character at the end of the chapter, the faster you read, the sooner you'll find out!

Misconception 3: “Reading fast means understanding less.” Many readers feel that they are already reading at the maximum speed their minds will allow. If they increase their pace, they will lose comprehension.

The Truth: Reading faster actually means understanding *more*! It doesn't seem to make sense at first, but people who read quickly actually have a better chance of coming away from the text with greater comprehension. This seems almost too good to be true, but it is a proven fact. Of course, reading speeds have their limits, but research has proven that you *can* successfully train yourself to read at higher speeds and obtain greater levels of comprehension.

Misconception 4: “I just can't do it.” If you're like me, you'll probably doubt your own capacity to speed read. Plus, learning how to increase your speed is a process that takes a little time and practice; it isn't a two-minute quick-fix. It is likely that this experience could lead to a few “speed bumps” and frustrations.

The Truth: You CAN do it! Think of it like bulking up your muscle at the gym: you don't start with the heaviest weights – you start small and lift, and then you increase the weight slightly and lift again. With time and the right training method, you will eventually have the physique you desire. The same is true with your mind – think of speed reading as simply a workout for your “brain muscle.” In this book, you should be able to get to grips with the basics in just an hour.

It's easy to let these misconceptions get in the way of your true potential. But keep your eyes on the truth and on the prize. Your path to improving speed and comprehension begins with the motivation to actually make it happen. Soon you'll be zooming through texts, understanding them better and saving

yourself loads of time and energy.

The Benefits of Speed Reading

So, now that a few of common misconceptions have been dashed, let's consider the benefits of speed reading – which should give you encouragement as you shift through the techniques in this book.

Benefit 1: You'll Save Time and Energy. As already mentioned, the most obvious benefits from increasing your reading speed are saving time and energy. When you begin applying the principles of speed reading, you can notice almost immediately how much more quickly you take in information. It feels like you're joining the ranks of elite scholars, rapidly gobbling down huge texts – practically within minutes.

Benefit 2: You'll Keep Your Mind Alert. One unexpected benefit of increasing your reading speed is that it can actually *give you mental energy* as you read.

How many times have you tried reading in bed before you fall asleep, only to wake up an hour later with your book still open and see that you have read nothing? Or how many times do you feel yourself growing more and more distracted as you read, forgetting paragraphs immediately after you've read them? This doesn't have to happen. Increasing your speed means making your mind and body more alert, and therefore more likely to keep going strong for longer periods of time.

Of course your energy levels depend on a number of factors, such as your health, the time you're reading, what you're reading, what you've been doing and so on. But overall, speed reading is a much more *active* activity, and this means it keeps your mind alert.

Benefit 3: You'll Comprehend and Remember More. A huge and very surprising benefit of doubling your reading speed is that you can actually *comprehend and remember more*. This principle is contrary to what you'd expect, but it's true. The next section focuses specifically on this advantage and how you can make the most of it.

So there is plenty of opportunity and incentive to double (or, yes, triple) your reading speed. With an understanding of how speed reading works and how you can take advantage of simple reading principles, there will be nothing standing between your current I-read-at-an-average-reading-speed pace and a *watch-how-quickly-I'm-turning-pages-now* pace.

Speed vs Comprehension, and How to Increase Both

Many readers are afraid of increasing the number of words they read per minute because they fear their comprehension of the text will suffer. But this simply is not true.

I used to have this misconception. I used to take pride in my slower-paced reading, believing that it meant I paid more attention to detail and had a better comprehension of the text than others. After all, I thought, it makes logical sense that the slower you go, the more information you remember. But to double (or triple) your reading speed and improve your comprehension, you have to let go of this myth.

The truth is that speed reading has been proven to develop your comprehension. The more time you spend reading at an increased pace, the more your mind will adapt to comprehending the material you're reading. Of course, there is an upper limit to this rule – you can't immediately try reading at 1,000 words per minute and expect your mind to keep up. However, when you double your reading speed, you're making improvements to your mind's capacity for learning.

So, what is “comprehension”? In the context of reading, it is simply the level of understanding of a text. If you have “basic” or “surface level” comprehension, you can recall factual information from the text using your short-term memory. If you have “deep level” comprehension, you are able to think beyond the text and integrate your own point of view/background experience with the author's intentions for the text. You are more of an “active” than a “passive” reader.

Amazingly, once you begin to increase your reading speed (which will also

mean you're reading *more*), your mind will automatically begin to train in increasing the depth of comprehension as well. After only a few short weeks of practice, your mind's comprehension 'muscle' will be thoroughly exercised and much more capable than before. An active, engaged and well-exercised mind is better prepared to capture vast swathes of information than a mind that is used to slower reading paces.

Make sure you take advantage of your new, active mind! Trust that it will grow, learn and adapt to your goal of doubling/tripling your reading pace. If you don't trust that your mind will keep up with your eyes, you'll never allow your eyes to move faster. Fortunately, there are lots of foolproof reading techniques (to be discussed shortly) that will double both the speed of your eyes and the depth of your mind.

Ready to get started? Before we dive into the techniques, we need to first briefly look at subvocalization – or, rather, how reading itself works.

Chapter 4:

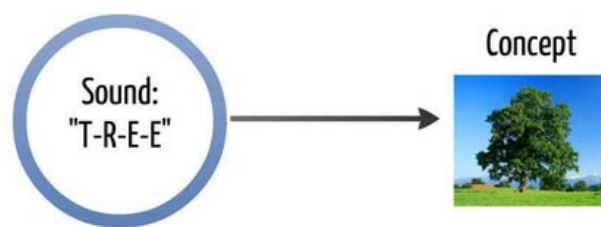
Subvocalization: Or, How Reading Works

A wedding ring is a piece of metal, but it represents much more. A flag is a colorful cloth, but it represents much more. Both items are symbols of something more meaningful.

The first step to understanding reading and learning how to double (or triple) your reading speed is to recognize that words work the same way. Words are symbols that represent something more.

What is a Word?

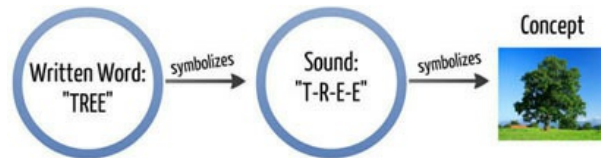
A word is a symbol, if you think about it. Somewhere way back in time, people decided that every time they combine the letters “T-R-E-E,” they are going to think about a tall, leafy object with a brown, bark-crusted trunk. The sound we make with “tree” is an audible symbol for the actual object. We think about our partners when we look at our wedding rings; in the same way, we think about an actual tree when we hear the sound “tree.”



The cool part about this symbol is that our minds don't have to do much work. We are automatically trained from the time we are young what to think of when we hear “tree,” or any other word.

Now, it gets slightly more complicated when we think about writing. If a sound symbolizes a concept, then writing symbolizes a sound that symbolizes a concept. Think about the words on this page, for example. Are you reading

them out loud? Chances are that you're thinking the words silently in your head and you still make meaning out of them. This means that your mind sees the written letters, thinks about the sounds those letters represent, and then connects these sounds to the meanings. This process is called subvocalization. Look at the diagram below for how it works:



Long story short, words are symbols of ideas. When we talk or read, we're really just using symbols to communicate what we're thinking.

This process of subvocalization can actually slow down your reading speed, because you're trying to pronounce each word in your mind. However, over the next couple of chapters, we'll look at how you can stop subvocalization altogether, and start reading blocks of words at once – to help you start reading at record pace.

That's all for now. Yes, this chapter is short – but you need to understand the essentials behind how reading *really* works in order to comprehend some of the techniques that follow. For now, just keep these ideas in mind – and let's continue.

Chapter 5:

Bad Habits and How to Fix Them

In order to double or triple your reading speed, you must be able to monitor and control the bad habits you indulge in when reading. You won't be able to improve your reading skills without first examining what makes you a slow or average reader in the first place.

Below are some of the key ways in which adults unwittingly slow themselves down as readers. Some – maybe even most – may apply to you, and you *might not even be aware of it*.

You'll also find a list of techniques for fixing the bad habits, thereby helping you toward the goal of increasing your reading speed. Remember: the more you apply the techniques, the faster your reading pace will improve.

In the chapter after this, we'll look at some of the real secrets to seriously speeding up your reading.

But for now, let me ask: what's slowing YOU down?

Issues *Before* You Even Start Reading

1: Suboptimal Physical and Mental Conditions. You may never have considered how much your physical and mental conditions affect you, but they can have an enormous impact on the speed and manner in which you absorb written information. Your ability to read fast is directly related to your physical and mental state. The following factors are guaranteed to slow down your reading:

- **You're tired** – Many people like to read before going to bed, but the truth is you're better off just going right to sleep. You won't be reading at your peak capacity if you'd rather be sleeping.
- **You just ate a lot** – After you eat any meal (but especially a big one),

more blood is rushing to your stomach than to your brain. Your brain just isn't going to be in top shape at this point.

- **You have things on your mind** – You need to have a clear, focused mind in order to reach an optimal reading speed. While some people can block out all other thoughts, many others can't.
- **You're in an uncomfortable position** – If you're uncomfortable, you won't have that clear, unfocused mind mentioned above.
- **You're TOO comfortable** – ... But don't make yourself *too* comfortable, or you'll end up convincing your body that it's time to go to sleep.

HOW TO FIX THIS: If any of the above seem to be affecting you, it's still okay to read, but understand that you would gain better results if you went to sleep or waited a little first.

2: Distracting Physical Environment. You also need to be aware of the conditions of your immediate physical environment. The things around you frequently serve as distractions that inhibit your top reading speed. Take a look at the biggest blunders readers make when selecting a location to read:

- **Noisy environment** – Psychological studies have proven that our minds cannot pay sharp attention to two things at once. For most people, even a little conversation behind them or the football game turned down to a low volume will be a distraction; your mind won't be able to distinguish the sounds of its own reading.
- **Visual distractions** – Reading in a crowded place where there's plenty of activity, or even reading in front of the television, means that there's lots going on in your peripheral vision that can distract your eyes from staying glued to the page.
- **Electronics** – Electronic devices are definitely a distraction – no doubt about it! If you're trying to speed read with the television on, Facebook open on your laptop and a text message on the go, you won't be able to get much reading done!

HOW TO FIX THIS: Simply decrease the number of distractions in your environment. Speed reading requires that your attention be centered on your

reading.

Issues *While You're Reading*

3: Reading Out Loud. The mind moves faster than the lips. When you're reading out loud, you're focusing on things like enunciation and elocution, plus you're pulling in so many more parts of your body: your lips, mouth, tongue, jaw, throat, lungs and so on. Each word needs its individual attention. Your mind doesn't need to work on this level. If you can choose between reading out loud and reading in your head, then choose to read in your head. Reading silently is easily five to ten times faster than reading out loud.

Think you're safe? Not yet. "Ha," you think. "I don't read out loud at all." But check yourself on this. Some people *actually do read out loud without realizing it*. You might not be reading loud enough for someone else to hear, but many unsuspecting people are surprised to realize that in fact they are moving their lips.

Amazingly, some people realize that while they aren't moving their lips, they *are* moving their throat muscles! You could be doing this too – telling your throat to reproduce the sound of each word. This problem is strongly connected to #4 – subvocalization – below.

HOW TO FIX THIS: This is simply a case of monitoring yourself as you read and discovering if you move your lips (or any other part of your body related to speech) as you read. If you find you do this, then make a conscious decision to stop – you'll soon be able to end this bad habit, and you'll notice an immediate increase in your reading speed.

NOTE: The issues below are very important, and represent the most crucial secrets for speed reading success – so please pay very close attention!

4: VERY IMPORTANT: Subvocalization. In Chapter 4, we discussed how reading works, how our minds turn written symbols into sounds and sounds into meaning. This process is called subvocalization. While it's an important aspect of reading (in that it enables us to derive meaning from what we read), it's possible that it's slowing you down as a reader more than is necessary

(because you're trying to pronounce each word in your mind in order to understand it).

When you subvocalize, your mind focuses more on the "sounds" of words than it needs to.

Read this sentence in your head:

"Jimmy went outside and tried to climb the tree."

What did you hear? Are you trying to pronounce each individual word ("Jimmy" "went" "outside" etc.)? If the answer is yes, you're probably taking up too much time subvocalizing.

HOW TO FIX THIS: Unlike #3 above, subvocalization refers to what's going on in your head, not the literal movement of lip muscles. It is therefore much harder to detect. This doesn't mean it's impossible though...

As you read, try to "listen" to what's going on in your mind. If you're hearing the individual sound of every word, that means that you're making your mind work much too hard; doubling your reading speed will be difficult.

The aim is to decrease subvocalization. Since words are directly related to meaning, controlling what you "hear" in your mind means that you can decrease the amount of time it takes to construct meaning.

This is an incredibly important technique, and we'll cover the practical steps to abolishing subvocalization fully in the next chapter. For now, just consciously try to note when this happens, and reduce it in your mind if possible.

5: VERY IMPORTANT: Regression: When you're reading, your eyes are not strictly moving in the left-to-right, top-to-bottom motion that you'd expect. Due to a lack of attention, control, or both, your eyes go back several lines or paragraphs and reread something that you've already covered. This can be a conscious or unconscious habit.

Sometimes your eyes just don't want to move in the right direction and inadvertently glance back at other portions of text. Other times, your mind thinks of a quick question or lacks a speed reader's confidence, forcing you to go back and get more information about something you recently read. Sometimes, you're just tired or distracted. Whatever the reason, regression negatively affects your reading speed because your eyes are not moving forward all the time.

(Note: Keep in mind that these are problems that get in the way of *fast reading*. Going back and rereading text is often considered a *good reading skill* when you're trying to get the most meaning. So, if you don't understand something you've read, definitely go back and read it again. If you're interested in reading at more than twice your current pace, be sure to choose texts that are easy enough for you to understand the first time.)

HOW TO FIX THIS: Again, self-monitoring is the key to determining how largely you are affected by regression. Try to pay careful attention to where your eyes and mind are going. Your eyes should move forward, line by line. Your mind should keep up with your eyes. If you find that either your eyes automatically revert to previously read text, or if you find that your brain doesn't understand or can't remember what you've already read, then you are guilty of regression.

Like the other bad habits of reading that slow you down, self-monitoring will be your saving grace. The more you can control your eyes and keep your mind focused, the more forward and less backward you will read.

A useful tool to use is an index card or other small "blocking" device. As you read, place this card over what you've already read. As you progress down a page, the card will cover more and more of the text. This will restrict you from going back, and also help you realize how much and how often you try to regress.

6: VERY IMPORTANT: Erratic Eye Movement: This is similar to regression, but worse. With erratic eye movement, your eyes don't just revert back to previously read text – they might also jump forward, glance at things outside the text, skip too far down or even stop dead, mid-sentence.

You want to make sure that you're reading in a left-to-right, top-to-bottom movement, but your eyes are doing anything but! What's more, they might be doing this without you even knowing.

Remember that sentences, not individual words, have meaning. When your eyes stop, pause or wander, it means that you're probably trying to derive more meaning out of an individual word rather than out of the sentence's complete meaning.

HOW TO FIX THIS: You guessed it: self-monitoring. Our eyes are naturally active creatures that often have minds of their own. When you consider how much information they can take in at any moment, it's amazing how much control we *do* have over them. If you detect that your eyes do not in fact take in words at a natural, fluid rate and movement, then you need to practice. Just like a golfer needs to practice the fluidity of his stroke to get the right "feel," a reader who wants to increase his speed needs to get the "feel" for what his eyes should be doing.

Prepare to Identify Your Bad Habits

The list of bad habits above – and the importance placed on identifying them – may seem a bit daunting at first. Here are some tips and tricks to ease you into the process:

- **Self-monitor** – As you'll have read, self-monitoring is the primary tool for getting rid of bad habits. You may not have retina sensors, EEG readers or lab equipment, but you should still be able to "catch yourself in the act" of bad reading habits if you pay close attention. Once you recognize which of the above habits are indeed slowing you down, you are giving yourself the power to stop those habits.
- **One habit at a time** – Don't focus on all of the habits at once: you'll go crazy and will probably make yourself commit them all even more than you would naturally. Instead, focus only on one at a time.
- **Practice thinking about each of these bad reading habits** – It may take some time to get into a routine of self-monitoring for these bad reading habits. But once you do it, you're already empowering yourself

to stop. Your goal is to decrease the bad and thereby increase the good. You'll find that if you can stop yourself from performing any of these bad reading habits, then your speed will automatically increase.

Once you've managed to break these bad habits, you're on your way to becoming a pro speed reader. If you're really interested in taking your reading pace to the next level, pay close attention to the next chapter. Here you'll learn more about some of the REALLY important techniques you can use to double (or triple!) your reading speed.

Before Moving On...

Before moving to the next chapter, read the passage below several times; try to eliminate a handful of the following bad habits when you read:

- Suboptimal physical and mental conditions
- Distracting physical environment
- Reading out loud
- Subvocalization
- Regression
- Erratic eye movement

Try to take one of these habits at a time and see if you are guilty of doing them. Once you discover which ones you're doing, you have that much more power to stop yourself and to apply the skills listed in the next section.

PRACTICE PASSAGE 1

Goal: Find out what your bad reading habits are!

Do You Struggle With Proper Piano Fingering?

Watching Bugs Bunny get his fingers tied into knots while playing Franz Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody #2 makes us chuckle on the outside, but on the inside we piano players know that there is some truth to the image. In every piano student's mind, deep in some illogical, fear-driven cavern, there

resides the notion that we might sustain some freak, inexplicable injury because of our pianistic incompetence. Or, not infrequently, watching our fingers slide around the piano uncontrollably reminds us of watching a three-legged horse on roller skates try to navigate down a slip'n'slide.

Aspiring piano students need to know what constitutes proper piano fingering so that instead of sloppily banging on random keys, they can gracefully glide through difficult music passages. One of the first approaches a student can take to learning proper piano fingering is to know the scales and the designated fingering for every single one. Scales are a great way to acclimatize the fingers to the keys and to reinforce the best ways of hitting the notes. The more quickly and fluidly you can play scales, the more likely you are to have appropriate fingerings when playing pieces.

Now, those black keys can be pesky: Their positions make trouble when trying to squeeze fingers between them onto white keys or to play a passage that requires alacrity. Because these keys are positioned farther away from your fingers than the white keys, it makes it especially difficult for your sympathetically shorter thumb to reach them. Some strict fingering experts declare that the thumb should never strike a black key. Good for them, but this rule comes with its own complications. A more seasoned performer should concertedly restrain himself from overusing his thumb on black keys, but no strict rule could possibly apply to all passages.

While there may not be any law mandating specific fingers for specific notes during specific passages of specific songs, music editors, thankfully, give their advice. As you flip through various pieces you'll notice the inconspicuous numbers written neatly above certain notes. Try these out. While no one would ever claim these are the "correct and only" fingers to use on these notes, they're probably your best bet at playing a passage smoothly. Sometimes the fingering may feel awkward at first. That's okay – try them out, but don't feel like some stuffy, glasses-wearing editor is frowning down on you if you decide a different fingering is better.

In fact, everyone's fingers are different, so it makes sense that certain fingering suits performers differently. The real approach to finding the proper piano fingering is discovering through trial and error which is the

best for your own hand. As long as you can play a passage accurately and smoothly – and as long as your fingers aren't getting tied into knots – then your fingering choice is the correct one.

Chapter 6:

Techniques to Double (or Triple) Your Reading Speed

Perhaps this is the section you've been waiting for, the reason you're reading this book.

Here, you will discover some of the most important techniques you can use to increase your reading speed. That means that if the average adult's reading pace is 200–250 words per minute, then after applying these techniques you can increase to 400–500 words per minute, *minimum*.

Remember the “bad habits” and from Chapter 5? Well this chapter goes into detail about the directly contrasting *good habits* you should develop instead.

Of particular importance here are techniques #3 “Read Phrases Instead of Words” (stopping subvocalization and reading blocks of words) and #5 “Meta-Guiding.” Be sure to give these techniques special attention, as they will be responsible for 80% of your reading improvement.

Right, let's dive in...

Before You Even Start Reading

1: Improve Your Physical and Mental Conditions. To get your mind in peak reading condition, you need to treat your body and mind well. Here are the two best ways to make sure your body is ready:

1. Make sure you are feeling energized – eat right and exercise. Don't try to read when you know you are tired.
2. Sit up straight – your posture impacts your mind. Remember that you lie down to sleep, not to read. Sitting up in a chair, on a couch or at a desk is the best position. Some people even stand and slowly pace.

APPLY IT NOW: How are you reading *this* text? If you have a computer,

chances are that you are sitting at a desk ... but are you sitting up straight or slouching forward?

With a Kindle, laptop, iPad or printout, are you lounging as you read this? Is it late at night? Are you tired, energized, angry, excited?

However you're reading, take a moment and adjust yourself. Get into a better posture. Maybe you need to go to another room or to an entirely different location. How about putting off the reading until your mind is more alert?

2: Pick a Suitable (and Non-Distracting) Reading Environment. Your chosen reading location can mean the difference between quickly absorbing your material and lagging behind. Before you read, be sure to limit the number of distractions: select a location that is prone to few noises and visuals, and make sure you remove any personal objects that might get in your way. It will also help to keep in mind that you wish to double your average reading pace: this will keep you motivated toward finding the ideal reading environment.

APPLY IT NOW: Where are you sitting right now? What is going on around you? Are there devices you can turn off? Are there any visual or audible distractions? How are the temperature and comfort levels?

Bear in mind that different people are distracted by different things. Some people can read very well in, e.g. Starbucks, whereas others would find the coffee grinding and Grande-ordering activities too much! Which setting suits you best?

While You're Reading

The following speed reading tips are specifically related to the habits of your eyes and mind while you read. Pay careful attention to the following recommendations, and make sure you take action on the **APPLY IT NOW** sections for immediate practice!

3: VERY IMPORTANT: Read Phrases Instead of Words.

Subvocalization, as you read in the previous chapter, loosely means that you're thinking about – and internally pronouncing – every word on the page. But this next technique will amazingly shrink the amount of time and attention you dedicate to each word. Get ready to think about reading in two, almost shocking new ways:

- You don't need to think about sounds of words!
- You don't need to read every word!

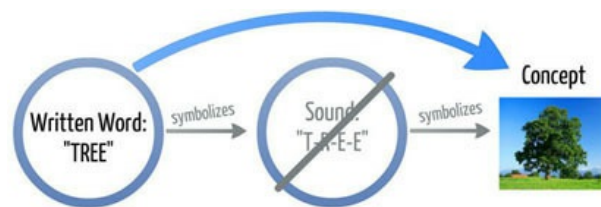
These two ideas may seem to radically disagree with everything you've learned about reading. But if you can embrace these revolutionary ways of approaching texts, you will increase your speed exponentially. Here's how you can understand and apply these techniques to at least double your speed:

You don't need to think about the sounds of words:

In Chapter 4, we discussed how thinking about the sounds of words helps us to understand their meaning (subvocalization). Yet in Chapter 5, we looked at how sounds (through both reading out loud and subvocalization) can slow down your reading speed.

So how do you avoid thinking in terms of sounds if sound is central to the concept of how words work? The answer: *You skip straight from the letters to the meaning.*

Basically, you need to trust our mind to quickly construct meaning.



We touched on this concept earlier – in Chapter 4: once you know how your mind processes reading, you can cut out the unnecessary steps. Do not focus on the sounds that words make – you simply don't have to. Your mind is fast enough that it can easily take familiar written words and immediately connect them to meaning.

If you're focusing on the sounds of words, you don't quite trust your mind enough to do what it is made to do. Real speed readers – individuals who have more than doubled their speed – know that a simple momentary glance is all that's needed to derive meaning from written letters.

Achieving this level of comfort and intimacy with words is slightly difficult... but only slightly. The key is to practice reading at a pace where you simply cannot pronounce words or think about their sounds. When you read at an increased pace, you will be training your mind to quickly and accurately construct meaning. This implies, of course, that you've broken a number of those bad habits that slow you down. Basically, if you practice speed reading, that means you're getting your mind to think very quickly about what it sees. The faster you're reading, the more quickly you're making your mind work. So think less about sounds, and more about meaning and about speed.

You don't need to read every word:

If you are like most people, then you probably try to make sure that your eyes capture every single word. But this only slows you down because you don't actually need to read every word. Have you ever had someone mumble something to you and you only caught a few words? Chances are that you were still able to understand that person. But how did you do it? Your ears heard only a few important words of their message ("watch ... for ... sharp"), but your mind was able to unconsciously fill in the blanks with "Watch out for the cat's sharp claws."

Just like you don't need to *hear* every single word, you don't need to *read* every single word. If you think about it, each sentence usually has only a few important words – the rest is just "filler." How many relatively meaningless, "connecting" words (like *the*, *is*, *and*, *of*, *with*, and so on) are in each sentence? Many. When you pick up your reading speed, you'll start trusting your mind to automatically absorb these filler words so that your attention will only be consumed by those few important ones in each sentence.

It's also important to remember that when you're listening to conversation or reading text, you're often aware of the context surrounding the words. You know, for example, that you're about to read a newspaper article about the economy, or a romantic fiction novel. Without this context it would be more

difficult to ignore the “connecting” words.

This means that you don’t want to think about passages word-by-word; you want to think about them phrase-by-phrase. We will define a “phrase” simply as a small group of words, between three and ten words long. Look at this sample sentence:

“I went to the store and bought eggs, but I forgot to get the bread I needed.”

If you try to read every single word, then you are reading 17 individual words. But if you trust your mind to “fill in the gaps” and make meaning out of phrases, then you might read only these four phrases:

“I went to the store | and bought eggs, | but I forgot to get | the bread I needed.”

By breaking this sentence into four phrases, your mind will be able to absorb the information much more quickly and deal with only four concepts instead of 17. And your eyes will also be able to gaze from left to right much faster, since they will be prone to pausing less. Some refer to this as “visual span enlargement,” since you are enlarging the area that your eyes see at one time from one word to a set of words.

Again, to do this successfully requires practice. The more time you spend reading at an increased pace and trying to absorb more than one word at a time, the more your mind will adapt to this style. Once this technique becomes routine, it’s easy to imagine how your reading speed can more than double!

APPLY IT NOW: Read the passage below at least twice.

1. The first time, try to pay attention to your physical muscles (lips, mouth, tongue, etc.). They should not be moving at all! You might be surprised

at your body's habits while you read, though!

2. The second time, pay attention to what your *mind* is doing while you read. Are you trying to pronounce each word in your head? Try to let your eyes flow quickly and naturally over the sentences so that your mind is forced to grasp the immediate meaning of words, not the sounds.

You may need to read the passage *multiple times*, in order to practice both techniques above.

PRACTICE PASSAGE 2

Goal: Read phrases instead of words, and be on your way to doubling your reading speed!

David knew it wasn't his fault, but he choked on his heart every time he thought about it. Dense rows of skin buckled around his forehead, and his eyebrows threatened to furrow themselves into his eyes until they squeezed out small drops of moisture. The tears slid their way down his red cheeks and dripped off his chin, gathering onto two intertwined fists. The fists visibly trembled. A small creak escaped the wooden plank supporting his knees as David shifted his weight, and although he had forgotten it for the moment, his knees were sore. Other discomforts, like the stifling suit collar and flimsy dress shoes, went equally ignored; yet although David's lips moved mechanically, he spoke no words. The words he sought still did not come. He was as silent as the body that reposed before him.

4: Locate the Most Important Sections of Text. Not all parts of a story or passage are created equally. Very good, very fast readers know that certain sections within texts have the most important information, while other sections have less important information. Naturally, they pay more attention to those sections that contain the most important information.

So, where are these important sections? Most of the time, authors put what you need to know in specific locations. Here are the prime locations for your eyes and your attention:

- Titles

- Headings
- The first sentence(s) in a paragraph
- The last sentence(s) in a paragraph
- The first paragraph(s) in a passage
- The last paragraph(s) in a passage
- Sentences with **bolded**, underlined, or *italicized* words
- Picture captions

You can dramatically increase the volume of reading you do in a given time by making sure that the bulk of your attention is given to the above listed elements. When you do, you're giving yourself two advantages: first, you are getting the main ideas of the passage and therefore making it clear to yourself what the point of the passage is; and second, you are allowing yourself to go even faster through sections that are not part of these "prime information" areas.

It takes a trained eye and mind to really get the right ideas the first time. Just like in #2 – where experienced speed readers know they can pay attention to some *words* more than others – experienced speed readers know that they can pay attention to some *sections* more than others.

APPLY IT NOW: Remember that you don't have to read every word. You just have to read the important ones. Getting your eyes to automatically float to the appropriate information can become automatic, but only with the right practice.

Read the passage below, but before you do so, review the list above of places where the most important information is usually found. Then, as you read, *pay more attention with your eyes and mind to the points on that list*. Spend a few seconds looking at and reading each important part, but only a few moments skimming through everything else.

PRACTICE PASSAGE 3

Goal: Pay close attention to the most important sections of the text, and simply skim everything else; this will help you to double your reading speed!

Luxury Ventana Apartments

Amazing Amenities for an Even More Amazing Price in Scottsdale

This impeccable apartment homes community offers residents with all of the virtues of a resort style environment and all the charm of a friendly community. Ventana Apartment Homes provide the luxury, style, and recreational amenities that represent the very best within the Scottsdale area.

Great Opportunities at a Great Place

Representing North Scottsdale at its finest, Ventana Apartment Homes offer a diverse setting of conveniences right outside of your doorway. If leisurely recreation is what you crave, the open spaces and beautiful scenery invite you to take them in. You can jog, bike, play tennis at nearby Thunderbird Park, or enjoy a serene walk while taking in the spectacular views.

Scottsdale also offers the opportunities for world class shopping, delectable restaurants, first class resorts, and unforgettable entertainment. The Phoenix Open, art shows, antique auto auctions, and the rodeo are all held in the immediate vicinity. The very best of the Scottsdale community lies within short walks, bus rides, or car trips – within minutes you can be engrossed in an amazing and affluent culture and a vivid range of unique experiences.

Amazing Amenities No Matter What You're Looking For

If you're looking for a great way to bask in some of the best weather in the world, then Ventana Apartment Homes offers plenty of ways to do it. Whether you enjoying swimming in a resort-style pool, soaking in the sun, or taking part in one of the many athletic courts in the surrounding area, there are plenty of activities for an active outdoor lifestyle. The gorgeous community grounds also feature inspiring fountains, stylish gazebos, and breathtaking exterior architecture.

The adventures continue indoors as well, where you'll discover a luxurious clubhouse that features comfortable nooks for quiet reading and a fantastic lounge perfect for relaxation or recreation. All of this capped with lurid design that sets Ventana Apartment Homes as one of the premier locations to live in Scottsdale.

Apartments Perfected from Top to Bottom

When you're not enjoying one of the dozens of perfect amenities found around the community and around the city, your very own apartment provides all you need for comfort and homeliness. For the discerning tastes there are ten distinct floorplans, including a two bedroom townhouse design. Every residence has a wide array of quality features that accent your style of living. Every interior features stunning design choices that mark these apartments as truly unique. Space-maximizing layouts and modern amenities help all residents to realize that they have truly discovered their perfect home.

All apartments have AC units and ceiling fans to help beat that Scottsdale heat. Plus updated appliances and cabinetry adorn kitchens. An additional wide variety of options, including utilities, internet, and television services, help to distinguish the Ventana Apartment Homes as a distinct set of first class residences.

(Text credit to www.ventanaluxuryapts.com)

5: IMPORTANT: Meta-Guiding. This is a fancy sounding word for a simple concept: All you need to do is use your finger, a pointer (like a pencil) or an index card to trace in front of your line of vision as you read. This serves as a motion guide, and will help your eyes maintain their speed and fluency, and reduce the erratic or regressive eye patterns that slow you down.

APPLY IT NOW: Try reading the passage below with TWO different tools.

1. **Tool 1:** Grab a pen or pencil and place it just to the right of the first word. Then move the pen/pencil across the line at a speed with which your eyes can just keep up. Do this line by line until the end. This gets your eye to follow the pen/pencil, keeping your eyes steady and sort of “pulling” them along at an increased pace.
2. **Tool 2:** When you read the passage a second time, grab an index card or sheet of paper. Place the card or paper underneath the line that you're reading. This, like using the pen/pencil above, will help keep your eyes steady and restrict them from getting distracted.

Another way to use an index card is to place the card over what you've already read. As you progress down a page, the card will cover more and more of the text. This will restrict you from going back.

A great trick while using an index card is to mark caret symbols (^) every inch along your index card. This will help you to read phrases rather than individual words (see tip #3 above). As you improve, use a new card with the carets further apart – so that you read larger phrases at a time.

PRACTICE PASSAGE 4

Goal: Use meta-guiding to maintain your eye reading speed and flow.

A Mended Heart

When he saw her across the park, his heart nearly leapt into his throat and choked him. He wriggled a finger between his neck and collar to loosen up the tightness he felt there, and then unconsciously smoothed down his suit jacket and pant legs. Small patches of sweat were wiped onto his fabric, but he knew that he had made a promise, and he couldn't wait to keep it.

She sat alone on the bench, serenely observing the children feeding the geese. Her expression went unchanged, studying the young boys and girls who timidly approached the birds with quivering crusts of bread. Her face was not particularly fascinating – it was old. It wore the characteristics of a woman who suffered a life of worry and preoccupation; a face that could have been called beautiful once, but years of faltered expectations had worn away a once prominently confident countenance into little blisters of woe. The soured eyes hosted bulging, sagging skin beneath them; her hair, once a brilliant blonde, now a fizzled white; her legs looked like two withered flower stems.

"She's just as beautiful as I remember," Jeffrey murmured to himself once he caught his breath. His fingers fumbled into his pocket and brought out a small handkerchief. He dabbed it on his perspiring forehead. His other hand wandered into his other pocket, where they felt for the thousandth time a small metallic object.

Jeffrey stood behind a tree and peered between its blossoming leaves, sort of

like a peeping Tom, but more in the spirit of a curious, enamored child. His fingers meticulously polished the metal in his pocket, now worn smooth. His heart, completely rebellious from his attempts to calm it, continued to thump loudly in his chest, thump loudly in his ears, thump loudly in his thoughts.

Consider: How fluidly did you read this? Did your eyes get distracted and wander, or did the meta-guiding help maintain a consistent flow of vision? Which tool worked best for you?

Prepare to Use These Techniques to Double (or Triple) Your Reading Speed

The best way to approach these strategies is exactly the same as the way you should approach your bad reading habits: **one at a time** and **with lots of practice**. It's amazing how dramatically these techniques can improve your reading speed. The more you acclimatize your eyes and mind to faster and faster reading speeds, the more you'll find yourself whizzing through texts that used to take you days to get through.

IMPORTANT: Be sure to pay particular attention to #3 "Read Phrases Instead of Words" (stopping subvocalization and reading blocks of words) and #5 "Meta-Guiding." These techniques in particular will be responsible for 80% of your speed reading improvement. Go read them again if you haven't yet fully grasped the principles. They're both incredibly important and potent techniques!

You have several sample reading passages above. Don't limit yourself to just one technique per passage! Before moving on, go back and read each of the passages again, trying to apply *all* the good habits and trying to avoid *all* the bad habits.

Go for it!

Chapter 7:

Practicing Speed Reading

Most would agree that to improve in golf, swimming or dancing, you need to practice your swing, your stroke or your moves. The same is true for reading.

While the previous chapter focused on the good reading habits you'll need to develop to double your reading speed, this chapter focuses on useful ways of practicing those good reading habits.

You can definitely double your reading speed in a short amount of time. But if you want to actually *comprehend* the text you're reading and remember more about it while also making your mind sharper, you need to do it right. I used to think that I could never read as fast as my best friend. Throughout high school and college I slowly pulled my way through texts as though they were chains around my ankles. Once I learned the tricks required to double my reading speed, I was so excited I almost expected to wake up the next morning a faster reader. This kind of thinking actually almost made me fail. I always tended to revert back to my bad reading habits and my slow reading speed. Why did this happen?

It happened because I thought that simple knowledge was enough – that simply knowing the principles of speed reading would prevent me from returning to my old bad habits. The real truth, however, is that although these skills can be applied very quickly (in fact, in well under an hour), it does take time to master them. Most people are able to apply the techniques immediately, and after a few weeks of consistent practice, will have formed solid skills and good reading habits.

How to Practice

There are a number of ways you can exercise your speed reading muscles and get yourself to the point of becoming a permanent speed reader. No single method is necessarily better than another. In fact, I recommend that you use

all four of the following methods to help achieve that doubled reading speed that will save you so much time and energy.

1: Time Yourself Reading and then Answer Comprehension Questions.

In this practical task, you'll start by measuring your average reading speed by reading two passages (which are of approximately equal length and can be found in the appendix of this guide). You'll then apply the techniques in this guide and will re-measure your reading speed. You'll also be required to answer some comprehension questions – to ensure you actually understand what you read and aren't going through the passages too quickly.

Make sure you have a timer to hand, to measure the exact number of minutes and seconds it takes to read the passages. The passages and questions are in the appendix of this book.

How to Measure Your Average Reading Speed

If you know how many words are in the passage, then this simple formula will tell you exactly how many words per minute (WPM) you're reading:

$$W / M = \text{WPM}$$

W = Number of words in the passage

M = Number of minutes you took to read the passage

So if you read a 500-word passage and it takes you 2 minutes and 30 seconds (2.5 minutes) to do so, you want to divide 500 by 2.5. This gives you a WPM of 200, which is considered average.

If you successfully apply what is taught here, you should be able to read each passage in just one minute!

Of course, you want to make sure you're getting the questions right, too. If you are reading the passages quickly, but are getting less than 80% correct in the comprehension questions, you should probably slow down.

There are two practice passages alongside comprehension questions in the appendix of this book. Try these out for starters!

You can also find sample passages and questions in other speed reading and educational text books, available in libraries and bookstores.

Many websites also provide sample passages for you to practice with. A good passage repository can be found on the Interlink Language Centers website: <http://eslus.com/LESSONS/READING/READ.HTM>. This website contains both sample passages and speed reading exercises. Another great resource is Cengage Learning, which will time your reading speed while you read a passage, and will then ask you a number of comprehension questions. Visit http://college.cengage.com/collegesurvival/watkins/learning_companion/1e/st

2: Try Reflective Journaling. This is a much less formulaic way of recording your progress. Instead of keeping track of numbers, times, and scores, you can simply express your impressions by writing about them in a journal. As you work on individual skills, write down what you're thinking about your actions. For example, if you sense that one of the major habits that slows you down is that you have erratic eye movement, record this observation in your journal. Or if you are consciously trying to apply one of the good habits, write down how much progress you feel you've made, how much this has helped you, and how difficult or easy this seems to be for you.

Journaling may seem a little juvenile, but it is a proven method that contributes to all kinds of improvement. The reason it works so well is because when you write something down, you become much more aware of it in future situations. So, if you are recording your thoughts on your speed reading progress, you are actually drawing to your attention ways you can continue to improve. The next time you sit down to read, your mind will automatically be thinking about how to maximize your reading speed. The more you write, the more exciting news you'll have to record in the future!

3: Document your Speed and Set Your Goals. This is really a combination of #1 and #2. People are much more likely to succeed if they write down their goals and actively chart how much progress they are making toward achieving these goals.

After determining your current average WPM (see tip #1, above), double it

and set that doubled speed as your goal. So, if you're reading at about 220 words per minute, set your goal at 440 words per minute. With each exercise you do that reveals your speed, compare it to where you started and where you want to end up. By setting a goal and consistently documenting your progress, you will see what your efforts bring and you'll continue to have the motivation to keep improving.

4: Use Computer Software. There is a wide range of computer programs available which specialize in helping you double your reading speed. Computer programs have a few advantages over conventional reading. First, such programs will automatically calculate your WPM. Second, you can set these programs to actually *display* words at a designated pace (so you could set the pace as faster than your current WPM – to practice reading faster). Third, these programs can give you texts in a variety of formats. For example, you can ask that you be given only one line at a time, which will stop you from regressing. The text can be presented in other ways too, to ensure that you read accurately and at challenging paces. Finally, like speed reading books, these programs come with sets of questions for each passage, to calculate your comprehension accuracy.

Computer software can take a lot of the work out of calculating your speed and tracking your progress. The downside, of course, is that you're reading off a screen. If you intend to do a lot of reading off screens, then this is okay. If you intend on reading from books, then you'll notice some differences in the way your eyes respond to that format. The difference, however, is only slight. Practice is still practice.

Search online for “speed reading software” to find contenders worthy of your attention.

5: Practice with Text You've Already Read. When you start out speed reading, you might want to start with books or articles you've already read: it will be easier to apply the techniques outlined in this guide and will give you confidence in your speed reading abilities. You can then proceed to texts you're less familiar with (although it's not advisable to start speed reading through completely new and unfamiliar topics – see Chapter 8).

Chapter 8:

When You Should & Shouldn't Speed Read

When individuals finally master the martial arts, earning black belts and achieving impressive skills, they are given the command: “Use what you’ve learned only when the need arises.”

The same is true of speed reading. If you use your abilities unnecessarily, then you haven’t quite mastered their true art. There are times when they are needed and times when they are not. And you need to know the difference.

Now that you’ve taken the time to explore the secrets of speed reading, there is one very important lesson you need to understand:

Speed reading is not a skill you need to use every time you read.

You don’t have to wait for a dire situation, as a martial artist might, but you need to be aware of when speed reading will actually be helpful to you and when it could be detrimental.

The real trick to understanding how to use speed reading is to recognize that every reader has different *reading rates*, not just one *reading rate*. Typically, excellent speed readers adjust their speed depending on the type of text and the portion of that text they are focusing on.

When It’s Great to Speed Read

You’ll have many opportunities to apply the speed reading skills you’ve learned so far. Here are some examples of situations where it would be beneficial to speed read:

1: When You’re Reading for Pleasure. When you’re reading for fun, you’re reading by your own rules. Hopefully, you’ve selected a text that is

enjoyable to read. There's no reason to trudge through an exciting book if you don't have to. So go ahead and bump up your speed! If you're reading for fun, there's no need to read *every word*. As described in Chapter 6, try reading in phrases: you'll enjoy the book just as much, and you'll reach the last page much more quickly!

2: When You Don't Need to Have a Perfect Understanding of the Whole Text. Some texts demand perfect attention to every word. But many others don't. Assess your reasons and goals before you begin to read. If you think you can go through a text and don't have to be responsible for every detail, then read through it at your new and improved reading speed. (However, remember that as you get faster, your comprehension will *increase*, which means that you might still have a thorough understanding of the text by the end of your reading exercise!)

3: When You're Reading Something that is Easy. If the topic or reading level is rather simple for you, then there's no reason not to read it as quickly as you can. You won't be distracted by difficult words or complex sentence structures.

4: When You're Reading Familiar Text. Our minds are better equipped to absorb information that is familiar to us. For example, shark experts won't find it particularly challenging to read about sharks, whereas non-shark experts will probably need to spend more time reading and understanding the information. It's up to you to judge whether the information is familiar enough to allow for speed reading.

When it ISN'T Great to Speed Read

Speed reading will often greatly increase your comprehension and enjoyment, but it's important to know of the situations where speed reading can actually hurt your comprehension and enjoyment – leaving you frustrated and actually increasing the amount of time you'll need to spend reading. Here are some examples of situations where it might not be beneficial to speed read:

1: When You're Studying First-Time Material. If you're trying to study

material the first time round – especially for a class or test – you might want to really focus on each detail. Studying is a learning process that requires that you take it slow, write down notes as you go, and go backwards when you want to tie different ideas together. You may wish to speed read in future, but you should probably take the first-time read a little slower.

2: When You're Reading Unfamiliar Text. The less familiar a topic is to you, the less likely you are to understand it if you read quickly. You can read fast when the ideas already match what your brain knows, but if the topic is not an area you're familiar with, slow down so that your mind gets used to the information.

3: When the Reading Level of the Content is High. Authors employ many different writing techniques to complicate their text. And when the text is difficult, you can easily misunderstand if you go too fast. The three primary reasons texts get difficult are because of the level of vocabulary, the complexity of the sentence structure and the depth of ideas. These big warning signs are telling you to “slow down”! Of course, “difficult” and “complicated” text is largely subjective, so it'll be up to you to judge whether you think you ought to slow down when reading it.

Chapter 9:

Conclusion

Congratulations on reaching the end of this brief guide to speed reading!
We've come a long way in a short space of time:

- We looked at what reading really is, and how it works
- We tackled the misconceptions and benefits of speed reading
- We uncovered the bad reading habits you may not even have realized you had
- We discovered the most powerful speed reading techniques available – including learning how to stop subvocalization, how to read in phrases, and the secrets of meta-guiding
- We discussed when it's appropriate to speed read – and when it isn't

This book has given you the most powerful techniques for doubling – even *tripling* – your reading speed, all in under an hour.

But here's the key: you **NEED** to practice. To install this powerful skill as a permanent habit in your life, you need to keep at it for the next couple of weeks. Proactively work to improving your reading speed with every appropriate text you read. Try reading this entire book again with your new-found skills and see how you get on.

Hundreds of thousands of individuals from across the globe have put the exact techniques you've uncovered inside this book to practice, with outstanding results. You're next.

So get to it, enjoy, and thank you for reading!

Appendix:

Practice Passages

You need to practice in order to really double your reading speed. The more you practice, the better you'll get! You'll have seen practice passages throughout this guide; below are two more passages with specific extra purposes:

- **Passage A** is intended as a Diagnostic Passage, which means that you'll use it to roughly figure out your average reading speed.
- **Passage B** is also intended as a Diagnostic Passage, but it should be used once you've read this entire guide and applied some of its techniques to other texts you've read.

The advantages of using these practice passages are twofold: first, you will know exactly what your WPM reading rate is for both passages; and second, you'll know how much of the passage you actually understood through the comprehension questions. Follow the instructions before and after each passage to make sure you're getting the most out of the exercises!

Practice Passage A

Instructions: Read the following short story at the *fastest but most comfortable rate* that you can. Also, *read with a stopwatch in your hand and time yourself* so that you will be able to calculate how many words per minute you are reading.

This passage is meant to measure your average reading speed, but it will only be realistic if you read at a rate where you were able to understand the story – so make sure you do understand it. There are questions at the end, to make sure you’ve understood the information you’ve just read.

Start your stopwatch now!

Phillip and Derek

The sparkling waters of the Togamar River flowed beautifully as the fresh summer sun shone down. The reeds on the river bank swayed gently in the wind and seemed to hum merrily to themselves as they enjoyed the cool waters and the cool breeze. The thick grass and weeds beside the river bank gently lolled their heads back and forth to the tune of the wind. The sound of the water began as a soft trickle where the river was shallow, but steadied into a strong roar as the water rushed past rocks, around bends, and into deeper, thicker streams. Hidden birds chirped in high branches beyond the tall grass, and frogs croaked incessantly. There was the steady sound of someone or something thrashing in the forest, approaching the river bank.

Suddenly, a tall, skinny boy appeared through the edge of the forest and made his way gallantly through the thick grass, clearing a path. Two other boys appeared behind him, carefully following his footsteps and trekking through the grass. All three boys had freckles, and they squinted in the sunlight as they emerged from the shade of the trees. Behind these three followed another very small boy who slowly and carefully forged his own way through the grass to the bank. He had a look of hesitance in his eyes, as though he questioned his every step, and he fearfully continued to follow

those in front of him. Behind him, though, closely followed a fifth and last boy, this one taller and thicker than all the rest.

“Phillip, where we goin’?” the fifth boy asked of Phillip, who was in front of him.

“For God sakes, Derek, I tol’ you we’re goin’ to the river,” Phillip called back over his shoulder, still carefully eyeing the three boys in front of him. “Les’ go.”

Finally, all five boys stood shoulder to shoulder beside one another on the sandy, reed-covered banks of the river. “Well,” said Tom, who was the first tall boy to lead the others to the bank, “this is the spot I tol’ you about.”

The other boys looked around at the shimmering water that quickly rushed past their feet. Phillip looked down and estimated that the water must have been at least 15 feet deep. He gazed over to the other side of the river, about 50 feet across, and noticed that from his side to the other side lay a long, dead, sturdy tree trunk. He forced a grin on his face as the three sneering boys to his left looked at him.

“I bet yer scairt, aren’t ya,” the tall boy sniveled at Phillip.

Derek rubbed his hands together and said into Phillip’s ear, “Phillip, what are they talkin’ about, Phillip? What’s that boy saying?”

“Not now, Derek,” Phillip said out of the side of his mouth. Then sternly, he said to the tall boy, “I ain’t scairt.”

“Yeah, c’mon!” the other two small boys screamed. “C’mon Phillip, we did it. Now you’ve gotta!”

Young Phillip shrugged his shoulders and looked at Derek, who likewise shrugged his shoulders and looked back at Phillip. Suddenly, an idea struck Phillip, and he held his head up a little higher. Phillip walked slowly toward the end of the tree trunk that stood on his side of the bank. Slowly, step by step, he trudged through the sandy, reed-covered bank to reach the fallen

tree. The young boys jeered him on, hooting and hollering boy-like phrases, compelling Phillip to walk across – he knew he had no choice. Derek stood confused behind the boys, his eyebrows furrowed into funny looking, crooked arches.

Suddenly, Phillip turned around and calmly said to the boys, “Watch this.” But instead of beginning to walk across the tree trunk, he turned to Derek and shouted, “Derek, jump in, Derek! Jump in the water! Jump in! Go for it! In the river, Derek!”

Derek hardly knew what to do, and definitely didn’t know what to think; so he quickly followed Phillip’s instructions, walked right up to the edge of the river, and jumped in. Then Phillip realized his mistake, for he suddenly remembered that Derek couldn’t swim well and would likely drown. The jeering smile on his face turned to fear, and then turned to panic as he saw his friend being swept down the river, head and arms flopping in the water.

“What have I done! I wish this didn’t happen,” Phillip groaned to himself. He bolted from his place on the tree trunk and dove in after Derek. The three dumbfounded boys on the shore hardly knew what had just occurred, and their laughter likewise turned into panic when they figured out Derek’s danger. Tom dove in too, and the two smaller boys stood on the shore.

Eventually, their teamwork brought Derek back safely to the river bank’s edge, and Derek thanked Phillip repeatedly for rescuing him, clean forgetting that it was Phillip who told him to jump in in the first place.

Stop your stopwatch!

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Instructions: Answer all of these questions as best as you can. *Once you answer a question, do not go back to it. Also, do not return to the text to find an answer.* We want to see how many questions you can get right by simply remembering what you’ve read. Once you’re done, check the answer key at the end to see how many you got right!

1. Throughout the short story, what is your main impression of Phillip?
 - a) He is intimidated and feels peer pressure from the other boys.
 - b) He is brave and the leader of the group.
 - c) He wants Derek to be safe and accepted by others.
 - d) He really wants to go fishing and be left alone.
2. What are the boys trying to get Phillip to do?
 - a) Push Derek into the river.
 - b) Jump into the river.
 - c) Walk over the river on a tree trunk.
 - d) Make Derek walk over the river on a tree trunk.
3. What is one characteristic about Derek that we can observe?
 - a) He follows Phillip around, asking questions.
 - b) He likes soft animals.
 - c) He is dangerous to others around him.
 - d) He is afraid of water.
4. What is Derek's relationship to Phillip like?
 - a) Derek is dependent on Phillip's leadership.
 - b) Derek can't stand being around Phillip.
 - c) Derek does not trust Phillip.
 - d) Derek treats Phillip like a pet.
5. How do the other boys try to force Phillip to cross the river?
 - a) They offer him a bribe if he makes it across.
 - b) They threaten that they'll hurt Derek if he doesn't try.
 - c) They make fun of him, calling him scared.
 - d) They grab him and try to push him across.
6. What does Phillip do to avoid having to walk across the river?
 - a) He runs away.
 - b) He tells Derek to jump into the river instead.
 - c) He flat out refuses.

- d) He yells back at the boys.
7. Why was it a mistake for Phillip to tell Derek to jump into the river?
- a) Derek is afraid of water.
 - b) This only made the boys continue to taunt Phillip.
 - c) Derek got all of the credit and glory for it.
 - d) Derek couldn't swim well and would probably drown.
8. What is ironic about Derek getting pulled out of the river?
- a) He didn't need help being pulled out.
 - b) He wanted to stay in the river.
 - c) He thanked Phillip for saving him.
 - d) He didn't realize he was in danger.

This passage has 829 words.

You read this passage in _____ MINUTES and _____ SECONDS.

This would be a total of _____ SECONDS.

To calculate your speed, follow these mathematical steps:

$$859 / (\text{seconds}) = \text{_____ WPM}$$

Check your answers with the key at the end of this book.

Out of 8 questions, you got _____ correct.

(Your number correct / 8) * 100 = _____ % correct.

Practice Passage B

Instructions: Read the following short story at the *fastest but most comfortable rate* that you can. Also, *read with a stopwatch in your hand and time yourself* so that you will be able to calculate how many words per minute you are reading.

This passage is meant to measure your new reading rate *after having practiced reading at twice your average speed*. You want to read at the maximum rate that will still allow you to understand the passage. Answer the questions that follow once you've completed the reading.

Start your stopwatch now!

Street Luge: Fun, Fast, and Dangerous

Going really fast is easy. Any top street luge racer can hit sixty miles per hour or more. The tricky part is slowing down. If you do it well, you can smile and race again. If not, that cracking sound you hear will be your bones!

Street luge racing is becoming more and more popular in the United States. It's a great test of speed and skill. But it's also very dangerous. The idea is to race down a hill while lying on a skateboard. The skateboard is extra long, but it has no padding. And believe it or not, it has no brakes.

To race, street lugers lie down on the skateboards. They lie on their backs with their feet in front. That puts them just a few inches off the road. They steer by leaning to the left or the right. They have to know exactly how to position their bodies when heading into a curve. Turning too much or too little will send a skateboard flying off course. It's no wonder street lugers are sometimes called pilots!

Street luge racing is not done on a special track. Instead, racers use regular streets. Although they wait until these streets have been closed to traffic, many hazards remain. Sidewalks, street signs, and telephone poles all pose

threats to the racers. And that's not all. Some race courses have ninety-degree turns in the middle. Any racer who fails to make the turn is bound to crash into something hard.

Stopping without brakes can be a real challenge. Racers must use their feet as brakes. They drag them hard on the asphalt. Often they dig in with such force that they leave skid marks. They send smoke and the smell of burning rubber into the air.

Racers need some kind of protection for their bodies. They wear helmets, elbow pads, and leather clothing. Still, sooner or later, anyone who races will get hurt. Bob Pereyra is a top street luger. He broke both ankles in one crash. In another accident, he broke three ribs. And in a bad practice run in 1995, he fractured his heel in three places. Roger Hickey is also a top racer. Over his career, he has broken more than fifty bones. He says he has also left enough skin on the road "to make a mannequin."

If the pros get this banged up, what happens to rookies? Darren Lott, author of *Street Luge Survival Guide*, writes about one young daredevil named Zac Bernstein. At the age of twenty-one, Zac knew no fear. He took to street luge quickly. He wanted to go faster and faster on every run. On one steep hill, he took a turn a bit wide. He went bouncing into a field and hit a storm drain. He smashed right into the concrete wall on the far side of the drain.

Without his helmet, Zac would have died. Even with it, he broke lots of bones and slit open his throat. Zac spent weeks in the hospital recovering. But just one month after the accident, he was back racing again. He had pins in his hip and leg and walked with a cane. But he was not ready to give up the sport he loved.

Street luge has been around for years. No one person "invented" it. Instead, the sport caught on in several places more or less at the same time. Darren Lott writes, "In the 1970s, we were constantly running into little groups that thought they were the only ones in the world doing it." That has changed. Today street luge is getting lots of attention. It has even shown up on TV sports shows. Still, as long as there are people like Zac Bernstein around, street luge will remain a truly extreme sport.

Stop your stopwatch!

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Instructions: Answer all of these questions as best as you can. *Once you answer a question, do not go back to it. Also, do not return to the text to find an answer.* We want to see how many questions you can get right by simply remembering what you've read. Once you're done, check the answer key at the end to see how many you got right!

1. What does street lugging involve?
 - a) Racing downhill while lying on a skateboard.
 - b) Holding on to a car while on a skateboard.
 - c) Racing on ice-covered hills.
 - d) Racing downhill with two other team members in a special luge car.
2. What speed can luge racers hit?
 - a) Sixty miles per hour or more.
 - b) Between 40 and 50 miles per hour.
 - c) Ten to 20 miles per hour.
 - d) About 100 miles per hour.
3. How do street luge racers steer their boards?
 - a) By using a remote steering control.
 - b) By dragging a foot on one side at a time.
 - c) With computer-enhanced equipment.
 - d) By shifting their bodies.
4. What does preparation for street luge races include?
 - a) Removing all street signs that can be moved.
 - b) Closing the street to normal traffic.
 - c) Installing rubber bumpers along curbs.
 - d) Wetting the pavement.

5. What is true of all luge racers – even pros like Roger Hickey?
- a) They replace their brakes after every race.
 - b) They avoid racecourses with ninety-degree turns.
 - c) They refuse to race without a padded board.
 - d) They face the possibility of breaking many bones.
6. What is one proof of street luge’s popularity?
- a) TV sports shows have begun to cover street luge events.
 - b) Street luge has been around for years.
 - c) Those who participate love the sport.
 - d) There is a lot of money in the sport.
7. How do lugers stop?
- a) They use a sophisticated system of brakes.
 - b) They throw themselves in the grass.
 - c) They drag their feet on the asphalt.
 - d) They hit a cushioned wall.
8. Which of these statement is true about the pros in this extreme sport?
- a) They are rarely injured.
 - b) They usually don’t need pads.
 - c) They frequently sustain minor injuries.
 - d) They suffer many broken bones.

This passage has 633 words.

You read this passage in _____ MINUTES and _____ SECONDS.

This would be a total of _____ SECONDS.

To calculate your speed, follow these mathematical steps:

$$633 / (\text{seconds}) = \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \text{ WPM}$$

Check your answers with the key at the end of this book.

Out of 8 questions, you got correct.

(Your number correct / 8) * 100 = % correct.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS ANSWER KEY

Passage 1

1. A
2. C
3. A
4. A
5. C
6. B
7. D
8. C

Passage 2

1. A
2. A
3. D
4. B
5. D
6. A
7. C
8. D