

# How to read faster

## Why should we read faster?

Reading faster helps:

1. To get through the reading material more efficiently
2. To read more
3. To improve the comprehension

## How reading faster and better comprehension connected?

We read one word at a time, when we read slowly.

### For example:

Reading accompanies us throughout our life defining its quality to a certain extent. The way **how fast we read** a piece of text and **how well we understand** it plays a determinant role particularly when it comes to University and work related aspects.

Thus, reading separate words this way makes it hard to understand what we read because we must remember each word as a separate piece of information. By the time we get to the end of a sentence we almost forget the beginning.

## What are the strategies for reading faster?

### Strategy No. 1: Think about your reading habits

- **Do you try to pronounce every word as you read?** Pronunciation is not necessary for comprehension. In fact, if you try to say the words, even silently, you will probably understand less. The effort of trying to pronounce the words will interfere with your ability to comprehend.
- **Do you usually move your lips while you read silently?** Saying the words will prevent you from ever reading faster than about 200 WPM, the fastest speed at which English can be spoken.
- **Do you follow the words you read with your finger or a pencil?** Following the words with your finger will also slow you down. The eyes of a good reader do not move line by line through a text. Instead they tend to jump ahead for new information, or back for confirmation of what was read. Your eyes should be free to follow your thoughts, not your finger!
- **Do you translate into your native language as you read in English?** Or do you often write translations of words in the English text? Translating into your native language takes time and prevents you from concentrating on the ideas. Furthermore, it interferes with your ability to think in English as you read.

**Note:** If you answered yes to any of the questions, try to change the habits that are slowing you down.

## **Strategy No. 2: Read in chunks**

Good readers in English "chunk" as they read. That is, they **read meaningful groups of words**, which are much easier to remember than a lot of separate words.

### **For example:**

Each chunk/ should be a phrase / that makes sense / by itself. (slower reader)

Each chunk should be a phrase / that makes sense by itself. (faster reader)

### **Exercise: 1. Read the following passage (aloud).**

Reading rate is "the rate at which a person reads written text (printed or electronic) in a specific unit of time" (Reading Speed). The statistics prompts that an average reader handles around 200 wpm (electronic) and 240 wpm (paper), while the accomplished one hits 700 wpm and 1000 wpm respectively (Is Speed Reading for You?). With comprehension implying "the act or action of grasping with the intellect" (Merriam-Webster), it becomes difficult to overlook the link between them two and the direct impact of reading rate on comprehension. I can recall the school times, when I would hastily read the history lessons during the school break trying to remember as much as possible, if I had not done it at home.

### **2. Read the same passage (aloud) divided into meaningful phrases.**

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### ***Was it easier to understand the passage with or without the division into phrases?***

**Note:** Students usually find that they understand better when their partners read the paragraph divided into phrases. In listening, as in reading, it is easier for your brain to take in and process information if it is divided into meaningful phrases.

## **Strategy No. 3: Reading sprints**

You read at a certain speed because **your eyes are used to moving across the page at that speed**. Reading sprints are an effective way to break that habit and force your eyes to move more quickly. Sprints will help you in the same way that running sprints help runners who want to increase their speed. They may seem difficult and tiring at first, and you will probably feel that you comprehend little of the text. But with practice, they will get easier and your comprehension will improve. Get your reliable clock or watch and your extensive reading book and follow the steps below.

**Step 1:** Mark with a pencil where you are now in your book. Make a note of your starting time in the margin and read for five minutes.

**Step 2:** Write in the margin of your book the number of pages you have read.

**Step 3:** Count ahead about the same number of pages as those you have just read, and mark the place. (For example, if you read two and a half pages, count ahead two and a half pages.)

**Step 4:** Try to read those pages in only four minutes. If you do not succeed the first time, keep trying until you do, using new pages each time. You will need to force your eyes to move faster along the page, skipping over words or even whole lines of text. Do not worry about your comprehension at this point.

**Step 5:** Count ahead the same number of pages again, and mark the place as you did before. Try to read that same number of pages in three minutes. If you do not succeed, try again with new pages.

**Step 6:** Now, try to read the same number of pages in two minutes. Keep trying until you succeed. You may be able to grab just a few words from the text. This does not matter. The important thing is to make your eyes move quickly and understand something.

**Step 7:** Mark your place in the book again. Make a note of the starting time and read for five minutes without forcing yourself to read fast.

**Step 8:** Count the number of pages you read this time. Compare this with the number of pages you read the first time.

### **Strategy No. 4: Practice timed readings**

Regular practice in reading against the clock is the best way to increase your **reading rate (the rate at which a person reads written text in a specific unit of time)**.

**Step 1:** Set a reading rate goal for yourself. If you have a personal goal, you will push yourself more to read faster.

- Your present reading rate: \_\_\_\_\_ WPM (words per minute).
- Your personal goal: \_\_\_\_\_ WPM.

**Step 2:** Be sure to record the exact time you start and finish each passage.

### **How to calculate your reading rate manually?**

**1. Calculate the average number of words per page.**

\_\_\_\_\_ (lines of the book page) x \_\_\_\_\_ (average words per line) = \_\_\_\_\_ (words on a page)

Average words per line = the number of words of 3 lines divided by 3

**2. Time your reading.**

\_\_\_\_\_ min. (finishing time) - \_\_\_\_\_ min. (starting time) = \_\_\_\_\_ min. (reading time)

**3. Calculate your reading rate.**

\_\_\_\_\_ (pages read) x \_\_\_\_\_ (words per page) = \_\_\_\_\_ (words you read)

\_\_\_\_\_ (words read) ÷ \_\_\_\_\_ (minutes) = \_\_\_\_\_ (reading rate/WPM)

### **Example:**

**1. Average number of words per page:** 24 (lines) x 18 (words) = 432 (words per page)

**2. Time:** 13:30 (finishing time) – 13:25 (starting time) = 5 min. (reading time)

**3. Reading rate:** 4 (pages) x 432 (words per page) = 1728 (words read)

1728 (words read) ÷ 5 min = 345 WPM (words per minute)