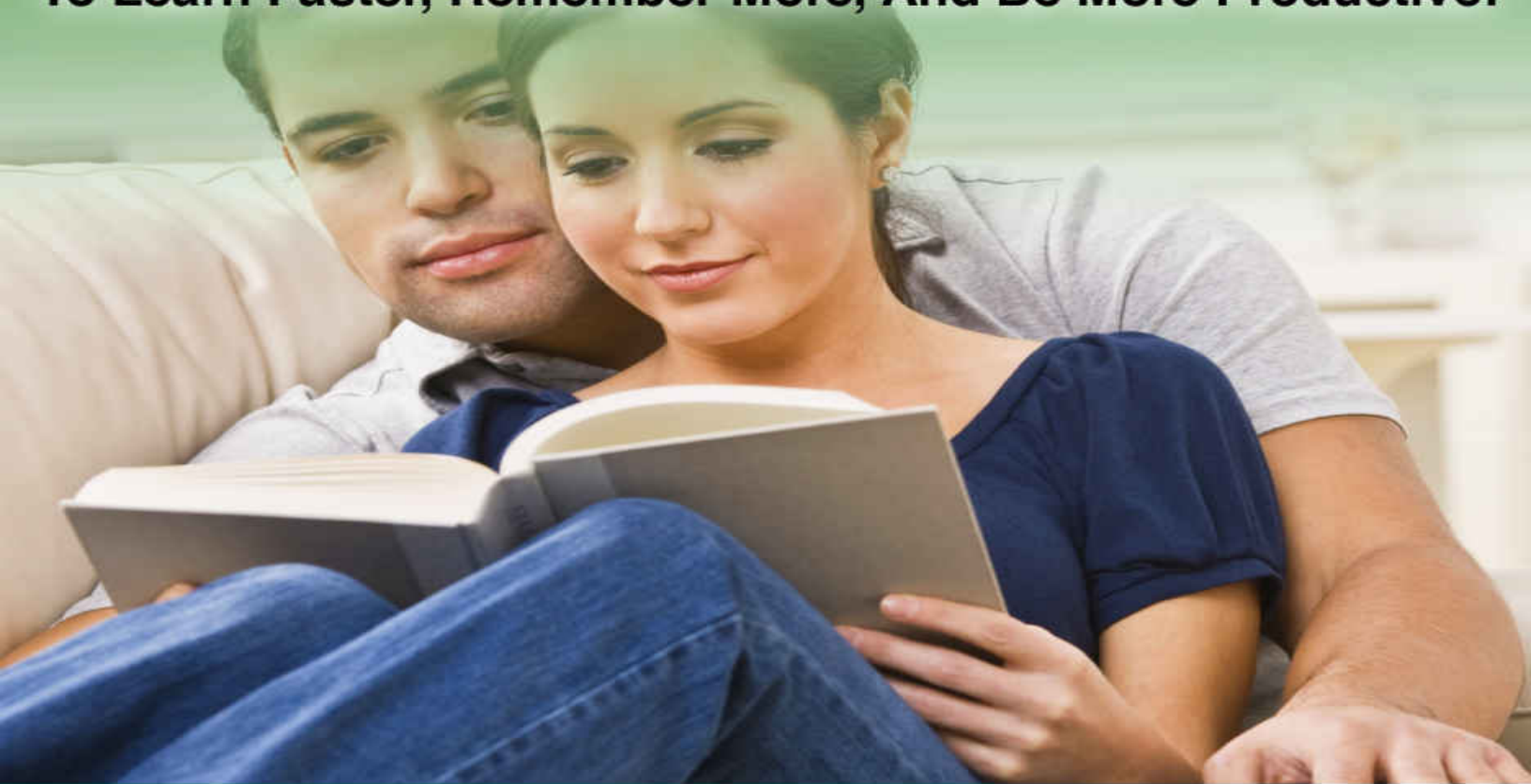


SPEED *Reading*

How To Speed Read

— 17 Powerful Speed Reading Techniques to
Increase Your Reading Speed by 300% in Just 20 Minutes
To Learn Faster, Remember More, And Be More Productive!



DAVID CLARK

Speed Reading

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Introduction

Speed reading has gotten a lot of press – both good and bad. The good press says that if you can read fast, you actually comprehend more of what you are reading. The bad press says that you absorb less when you are reading too quickly.

In actuality, both points of view have some merit. But they miss the biggest point: people who read fast are accomplished at reading. They are not only fast readers, they are good readers.

Even good readers do absorb less when they are pushing at their top rate of speed, skimming along grabbing key words out of text; but at their cruising speed they gather more knowledge at a time, and they usually retain it well.

The good news about all of this is that if you are capable of reading at all, you can learn to read faster. The faster you can read, the more information you can take in at one time, and the easier it is to understand the general concepts of a piece of text.

In just 20 minutes – the time that it should take an average reader to read through this book at a moderate pace – you can gain the tools you need to become a better reader.

There is nothing mysterious about learning to read – and even less mystery about learning to read well. It starts with learning to decode the words; that's teacher talk for look at the letters and understand what word they make.

It progresses through reading simple sentences, and evolves throughout a reader's lifetime. Good readers usually derive a great deal of enjoyment from reading.

Being a good reader can open many doors for you. You can become a better student, a better worker. You can increase your comprehension of legal documents, and you can make it through tall stacks of paperwork at a rapid pace.

You can learn new skills without laboring over the text books or directions needed. You can become a better citizen – because you can skim through

newspaper and Internet articles quickly, enabling you to gather information from a variety of sources.

You can even increase your enjoyment of reading fiction and non-fiction – just for the fun of it.

Reading faster can make your life better. So let ' s turn over to chapter one, and get started.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1 – The Seventeen Ways to Become a Better Reader

Analyzing Why You Want to Be a Speed Reader

Preparing to Learn

Read when you are Alert

Chapter 2 – Taking the Plunge into Reading

Chapter 3 – Improving Retention

Chapter 4 – Computer Assisted Reading Practice

Chapter 5 – Planning Your Reading Practice

The Routine

Correcting Bad Habits

You can do it

Chapter 6 –List of Computer Programs Designed to Improve Reading Skills

Conclusion

Chapter 1 – The Seventeen Ways to Become a Better Reader

Here are seventeen ways to increase your reading speed and your reading comprehension.

1. Analyze the purpose for reading.
2. Read silently, without subvocalizing.
3. Use word shape recognition.
4. Check your vision.
5. Read in good lighting.
6. Read when you are alert.
7. Practice reading regularly.
8. Time your reading periodically.
9. Push yourself to read beyond your best comprehension speed as an exercise.
10. Read a variety of material, ranging from very easy to very hard.
11. Fit your reading speed to your reading need.
12. Learn to read in chunks.
13. Avoid re-reading passages.
14. Let the words make pictures in your head.
15. Move the book away from your face so that you see a wider array of words at once.
16. Follow a pointer across the page to reduce your eye movement.
17. Use speed reading software to test yourself, and to help push your reading speed and comprehension.

Do these methods look like a lot of hard work and way too many things to do all at the same time? They certainly can be – if you do not have a method or routine set up to take you through the steps.

An easy way to do this is to jump straight to number seventeen, and to invest in speed reading software that can help you go through a variety of steps. But speed reading software alone will not teach you to be a faster reader with better comprehension.

Nor will working through the steps above, one at a time in order. But there is a logic behind learning to be a better reader.

Analyzing Why You Want to Be a Speed Reader

There are a broad variety of reasons why you might want to be a speed reader. Maybe you really don't like reading very much and you would like to get it over as quickly as possible. Maybe you are a business person or a student who must get through a large amount of written material daily.

Maybe you are simply struggling with reading, and find that you are falling farther and farther behind your peers because you read slowly with difficulty. The reason that you want to increase your rate of reading will affect your approach to learning to read more quickly, and will affect your commitment to becoming a better reader.

Make no mistake about it: you might be able to read this book in fifteen minutes, but becoming a great reader takes practice – just as learning to type quickly and accurately or shooting a basket takes practice.

Preparing to Learn

Assess your ability to read

If you have difficulty with basic reading, you might need some help from a reading coach. However, you can still use the techniques in this book to become a better reader.

Check your vision

Just as you might buy a good pair of running shoes before starting an exercise program, a good first step toward becoming a good reader is to get an eye exam. If your vision needs correction, it will make reading very difficult.

If you are an elementary or high school student, you can ask your school nurse or administrator about free eye exams. If you are an adult, Walmart and other department stores sometimes offer deals on eye exams, and on eye glass prescriptions.

Uncorrected poor vision will definitely slow your reading speed.

Get Comfortable – but not too comfortable

Sit in a chair that will allow your feet to touch the ground, and that will support your back. If your body is uncomfortable, your discomfort will intrude upon your reading concentration. If you are reading a large, heavy book, you might want a table or holder for the book.

Just Right Lighting

For good reading, you want light that will allow the letters to make good contrast with the page background; but you do not want light so bright that it glares off the page – particularly if you are reading a glossy magazine.

Read when you are Alert

Practice speed reading, or read for comprehension when your brain is fresh

Many people like to read a novel or even a devotional at bedtime. While that can be a good way to go to sleep, it does not promote an increase in your reading speed nor does it improve your comprehension of the material.

Block out time for practice

Schedule time to practice reading two or three times a week, when you are bright, alert, and ready to learn. Your brain gets tired, just as the rest of your anatomy. Your chance of improving a mental exercise, such as reading, is greatly improved if your brain is well-fueled with nutritious food and it is well-rested.

Chapter 2 – Taking the Plunge into Reading

When mapping out a journey, it is a good idea to find a starting point. Speed reading works the same way, so your first step is to test your current reading speed.

An average rate of reading for anyone age twelve and above is about 250 words per minute. Reading at that rate will limit your ability to read through text books, business papers or any other heavy reading task.

On top of knowing your average rate of reading, you need to know how quickly you can read through different levels of texts.

Testing Your Reading:

A simple way to test your rate of reading is to select a book that you enjoy and that you can easily read. Set a kitchen timer, and begin reading. When the timer goes off, make a light mark to show where you stopped.

Count the words in three lines of text. Divide the total by three to get the average number of words in a line. Next, count the number of complete lines you read. Multiply the number of lines by the average number of words.

The result is roughly the number of words you read in three minutes. Divide your total words by three to get your words read per minute.

Select two more books, one that is a little bit harder than the book you enjoy; and one that is very hard for you. Repeat the reading test for each of them. Chances are, your reading rate will slow down when reading the harder texts. That is perfectly normal.

Pushing to Increase Reading Rate:

One way to increase your reading rate is to go back to the easy text on which you first tested yourself. Reset your timer. Consciously, without worrying about understanding the words, push your eyes to move across the lines of text as fast as you can.

The goal at this point is not to understand what you are reading, but to very quickly decode the text.

You should have been able to skim through more words than you read when you were just cruising along.

Stop Saying the Words

When young children learn to read, they are encouraged to say the words out loud. There is a good reason for this: speaking the words engages the part of the brain that processes information through hearing as well as the part that processes information through sight.

Many methods of learning to read depend upon children learning to associate certain letters and combinations of letters with sounds.

In order to read more quickly, you must let go of reading the words one at a time, as if you were reading them out loud. The reason for this is very simple. People normally speak at a rate of somewhere between 90 and 180 words per minute.

They can think at a rate of 700 to 1200 words per minute. (Beebe, *Public Speaking: An Audience Centered Approach*, 2014.) Furthermore, people do not necessarily think in words; they often think in concepts, pictures or chunks of emotion.

This ability means that they can actually process text at a rate greater than 1200 words per minute.

Great readers become impatient waiting for someone to read text out loud – because they can gallop ahead, learning about the content or story at a much greater rate than it can be read by a performer.

One way to disengage your mouth from your brain when reading is to hum out loud. Find a quiet, secluded place for this exercise. You don't need to hum an actual tune – just let your mouth make noise and your lips make shapes that are unrelated to the content that you are reading.

This is somewhat like patting your head and rubbing your stomach at first – but soon you will find that your mouth is busy doing something that is unrelated to the words that you are reading.

If you find that you cannot hum on your own, play easy instrumental music that has a sing-able tune and hum along with it. You can even select music of varying lengths, and use it to time your reading practice.

Push Your Eyes to Move Faster

There are a variety of ways to train your eyes to move through text more quickly. One way is to use a mechanical reader. These devices were used in the early to mid-1960s to help readers increase their reading pace.

They came in two types: a mechanical arm that moved down a page of text at a preset rate, or a scroll of print that was wound past a window. These are somewhat difficult to find these days – although they sometimes appear on eBay.

You can also move a stylus along a line of print, keeping it just ahead of where you are actually reading. Try to keep your eye focused right behind it. This will also help you keep your eye on the line of print that you need to read, without straying to areas outside the block of print.

And alternative method is to use a card that is exactly the same length as the line of print and move it down the page, following along at the top of the card. Strive to move the card faster and faster until you no longer can read and comprehend the words you are seeing.

Learn to Read in Chunks

Just as a good typist learns to type letter combinations without excess thought, good readers learn to read phrases. Make a set of flash cards with combinations of commonly used phrases such as “in the middle of,” “once upon a time,” or “according to the author of.” Make sets of 20 or 30 of these cards.

Turn them as quickly as you can, or even turn your cards into a flipbook that you can thumb to make the phrases come up quickly. When a set of phrases becomes too easy, create a new batch.

Scan a page of print, and see how many word chunks you can quickly pick out of the page.

Develop a Sense for the Rhythm of Text

Language, like music, has rhythm. You will find that it is much easier to read quickly through text that has short, simple sentences with familiar words. Most modern fiction is written in language that is easily comprehended at the eighth grade (age 12-13) reading level.

This is because it is written for enjoyment – not to challenge the reader. Newspapers, assembly instructions, and much of the information you will find on the Internet is written at the same reading level.

Formal writing – such as essays, graduate level theses and legal texts – use longer sentences with specific terminology. They are, therefore, more difficult to read.

You might say that fun reading has a polka or hip-hop sort of rhythm; while formal writing moves at the pace of a waltz with all the complexity of a choreographed dance.

Matching your reading pace to the style of writing will feel more comfortable and help your reading comprehension.

Chapter 3 – Improving Retention

Reading quickly will, in the long run, help you retain more information. Readers usually have a variety of reading paces: a gentle cruising speed, used for reading books for fun; a careful speed, used to read recipes or directions for assembling something mechanical; a steady pace, reserved for reading required texts; and a fast, skimming pace used to locate specific information in a large volume of print.

Obviously, you are less likely to retain information that you pass through in a fast sprint. That is perfectly all right. Let's say you are training for a big race. In order to get your running speed up to its very best, you are likely to run every day.

You will use a variety of movement paces during your practice: a steady run for distances, a sprint that pushes you to your top speed, and a walking pace to cool down and just keep moving when you can no longer endure running full out.

Without those changes in speed, and without daily practice, you would never increase your running speed. But if you persistently practice, and if every day you use a combination of speeds, your endurance and your speed will gradually increase and you will be able to run farther and faster every day.

Reading works a lot the same way. You can quickly improve your reading speed through daily practice. As your top speed increases, so does your easy, cruising speed. As your cruising speed increases, so does your comprehension of the material you are reading.

Remember that part about letting your mind make pictures, and about reading in phrases and chunks? When you develop those skills, you can make it through complex material much more quickly. You can improve your retention of material by using a method called SQ3R or SQ4R.

SQ3R

SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. It is an extremely effective way to read textbooks or legal papers.

First, look through the material, scanning for main headings, illustrations, diagrams and other items that stand out from the text. Develop questions you would like to have answered about the material.

Read the material at your normal, cruising speed. Look away from the material, and either state out loud what you remember about the text or write it down. Look back at the material, comparing it with your notes. Did you remember all the details?

Is your remembered information correct? What do you need to add to your notes? Were you able to answer all of the questions you formulated from looking at the headings?

SQ4R

SQ4R uses a similar technique, but adds reflection as a final R. After you have surveyed, questioned, read, recited and reviewed, you then reflect upon the material. How does it relate to you personally? Is it likely to be on an exam? Can you use it in real life? Is it (if you are reading a contract) financially viable? Do you feel that you understand the material?

If you cannot answer “yes” to that final question, then return to the material and re-examine it. Keep in mind that even great readers rarely retain all the information in a piece of text upon first reading. Retention is often the result of using added study methods.

Dealing with Unfamiliar or Difficult Vocabulary

At some time you will need to read material that is dense with unfamiliar and possibly difficult words.

When elementary school students are learning to read, they are told to select books using the three-finger method when selecting books for reading practice. That is, they read through the first half page of text in the book.

Each time they encounter a word they don't know, they are to raise one finger. If they encounter more than three unfamiliar words in a half-page of

text, the probability is that the book will be too difficult for them to enjoy reading.

Unfortunately, readers don't always have the luxury of selecting a book "at their reading level." Textbooks, legal documents or even some sets of directions might have unfamiliar words. When you encounter a document that is dense with new vocabulary, it will definitely slow your reading rate and diminish your comprehension. Don't despair. There are ways to deal with it.

First, use your SQ4R methods. Skim through the information, looking at the main headings, gaining the general shape of the document. Second, go through it, make a list of the new vocabulary, and look up the words.

Third, re-read the material at your cruising pace with your newly created glossary in hand. Look away from it. Say out loud or write down what you believe you have learned. Turn back to it, and review it. Finally, reflect upon it. Do you now know enough about the material to understand it?

Chapter 4 – Computer Assisted Reading Practice

Computer programs designed to increase your reading speed can help you with your reading practice. There are a broad variety of them, ranging in cost from free to several hundred dollars. The free or inexpensive programs are readily downloadable to any device that will play an eBook. Some do one or two things, others will do several.

Focused Reading:

Some of the programs flash one word on the screen at a time. The word is displayed in the center of the screen, and the words are changed out at a specific interval. After the text has been displayed, the reader is then asked to answer questions about the text.

This exercise is great for people who have a hard time tracking words across a page or who have a hard time paying attention to words.

Timed Reading:

Timed readings display a block of text, and ask the reader to click a button at the end of the text when finished. These are great for determining your reading rate, and for periodically checking it to see if you are progressing or if you are slowing down.

Scrolling Text:

Scrolling text is the modern version of the old mechanical reading trackers. This is a good way to push yourself to greater reading speeds, and to know whether or not you are actually challenging yourself to read at an ever-increasing pace.

Word Search Exercises:

Timed word searches help you to develop the ability to pick key words or terms out of a page of text. They push your brain to discern word or letter patterns.

Word Matching Exercises:

Word matching checks your ability to quickly tell the difference between word patterns. It also (because it depends on your response speed) tests your hand/eye coordination.

Retention:

A computer program can check your short-term memory retention by flashing a combination of letters or numbers on a screen and requiring you to respond by typing it back to the computer.

Eye Training Exercises:

The reader is asked to follow a moving text that is null in content across the screen. The object moves at a rate of speed just slightly greater than the reader's most recently tested reading speed.

Eye Span:

This exercise displays two or more words. They might be displayed close together or far apart. It is intended to see how many words or the distant you can visually comprehend at the same time.

Computer reading trainers are great for pushing your reading speed to the next level. They are somewhat ok for checking reading comprehension, by using questions over pre-selected material and by using various exercises that require the participant to remember material flashed on the screen.

However, in the long run, using a computer program to increase your reading speed and comprehension is rather like learning to ride a bike with training wheels: eventually the training wheels have to come off, and you have to learn to ride without them.

In order to gain the maximum benefit from your reading practice, you will also need to apply your skills to real-life situations. These can include reading for pleasure, scanning catalogs, reading text books, reading directions and more.

Chapter 5 – Planning Your Reading Practice

Like any skill, reading requires practice in order to get better. An easy way to increase your reading speed and to commit to learning to read more quickly with greater comprehension is to sign up for a semester-long reading seminar. Not everyone will have the opportunity or option to do this.

Fortunately, you can improve your reading without investing in anything at all – not even a computer program. If you happen to already have a computer, cell phone or tablet, reading trainer applications can be fun and can facilitate improving your skills.

Commitment to improvement:

Like any other skill – from athletic endeavors to playing a musical instrument or learning to type – practice is needed for improvement. However, you will notice dramatic improvement in just a few days if you make a commitment to apply the principles outlined in this book.

Plan a Time to Practice:

Don't leave your practice time to chance. Reserve a time each day to practice reading for fifteen minutes.

Select a time when your mind is rested. Remember, as mentioned before, a common mistake when practicing reading is to read at bedtime. Regardless of how you spend the rest of your day, your mind and eyes are tired by this time.

Pushing yourself at the end of the day will result in eyestrain and mental fatigue. You can still make progress, but not as much as you would at a different time.

The Routine

Sprint

Start your reading practice by reading a set of material for three minutes at your top rate of speed. For this practice, use text that doesn't have a lot of headings, pictures or other interruptions to the text. Mark the amount of text that you were able to read in three minutes.

Calisthenics

Next, do an exercise. If you have a reading app on a cell phone, tablet or computer, use the app. If you do not have an app, do a word search. Set a timer, and see how many words you can find in three minutes or less. Make a note.

Distance Run

Find something to which you can apply SQ4R. The morning newspaper might be a good selection for this. Survey the headlines, and create a question or two. Settle in to read the content at your normal cruising speed for five minutes.

Spend the final five minutes of your practice time making notes about the content. Review your notes. Did you remember the articles accurately? Reflect on the content. Consider how it might affect your life.

Sprint

If you have time in your busy day, try another speed read before you put your materials away.

Record

In order to track your progress, you need to keep records. Calculate the number of words you read with your first speed read, and write that down.

Next, record the name of the word search, and the number of words you found. If the word search is rated, note the difficulty level.

Record the number of words you read at your regular cruising rate. How good was your comprehension? How did it compare to your speed reading?

Finally, record the number of words you read during your final speed reading.

Reflect

By the end of the first week, you should begin to see a noticeable difference in your reading speed. Each person is an individual, so it is difficult to predict the exact amount of improvement. However, some people have been able to double or even triple their reading speed.

Correcting Bad Habits

One reason for the dramatic increase is that planned reading practice can correct bad reading habits. Because you are aware of your reading, and you are paying attention to how you do it, you more readily notice practices that are slowing you down. These might include:

Losing your place

When you lose your place when reading, you wind up re-reading the same material. An easy fix for this problem is to hold a card under your reading or to use an app that feeds the content to you one word at a time.

Focusing on other things

Letting your attention drift, and daydreaming, will definitely slow down your ability to make it through material. Reading for short stints and taking regular breaks will cut down on this problem. Promise yourself a reward at the end of each section of material – even if it is something as simple as a trip to the water cooler.

Looping Eye Tracking

This occurs when your eye somehow snags back onto the first word in the sentence you just read; thus, you wind up re-reading it. The solution is very similar to avoiding losing your place: hold a card or sheet of paper under the line of print, and move it down when you reach the end.

You can do it

With consistent practice, almost anyone can improve his or her reading speed and comprehension. It take commitment, consistent practice and a desire to learn. In a few rare instances, people with learning differences might need the help of a reading or learning coach.

Fortunately, most people can improve their reading skills just by following the principles outlined in this book.

Chapter 6 –List of Computer Programs Designed to Improve Reading Skills

This list of reading programs is not comprehensive, nor does it endorse any particular program. The goal of including this list is to give the reader a set of resources to explore.

Reading Trainer:

Focuses primarily on building speed, but also works on comprehension and on selecting specific data from a field of text. Reading trainer was developed using open source software, and is compatible with most platforms. It is a no-nonsense app that does not include games or incentives for improvement. Cost: 2.99 <https://www.common sense media.org/app-reviews/reading-trainer#>

Velocity by Lickability:

Runs on Apple products, only. Users can load any text into the program. Velocity displays the text, one word at a time, in the center of the screen at a pre-selected reading rate. Cost: 2.99 <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id675410630?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4>

Mindplay:

A full-service reading program for use at home or at school. Mindplay allows users to select a grade or ability level. In addition to basic reading training, it also works on comprehension, and is backed by a service team. Cost: \$39 - \$142.00 for home use. <http://www.mindplay.com/would-you-like-mindplay-reading-products-for-the-home-or-school/>

Acceleread:

Designed for iPad and iPhone. Received better reviews than Velocity, and seems to have more functions. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/acceleread-speed-reading-trainer/id528963250?mt=8>

Spreeder:

A free online program that allows the user to paste in any text, then set the presentation speed and size of font.

Speed Reading Test Online:

Check your reading speed here. Free to use. <http://www.readingsoft.com/>
Tests reading speed by user clicking start and stop for prepared text.
Comprehension is tested with questions after reading.

Freader:

An online subscription coaching program. Starts with reading comprehension/speed test. Cost: 4.99 per month.

http://www.efficientreader.com/frolv4/index.php?/frol_main/entry/EN

Conclusion

Practicing speed reading helps you to read more quickly – even when you are cruising along at a comfortable speed. When you take less time to read through material, you are able to see the big picture more quickly.

This allows you to better comprehend the over-all content. When you read at your top rate of speed, you are less likely to accurately absorb the material – but comprehension isn't the initial purpose of pushing yourself to read faster.

The purpose of pushing your top reading speed is so that you can develop a better cruising speed.

The greater your comfortable reading speed, the easier it is to read through textbooks, stacks of reading material or even to increase your ability to enjoy novels or fun material. When you are more comfortable with written material, it is easier to make your way through difficult reading – such as legal documents or important directions.

In order to be able to speed read, you need to have mastered basic reading. You need to be able to see the words easily; and that might entail a visit to an eye care professional. Good lighting and physical comfort will also enhance your ability to read and understand material.

There is no downside to learning to read faster – unless it is finding enough good books to keep up with your reading habit. When you read quickly, you enhance your ability to learn, to conduct business and to still have time left over to go do something else that is fun.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – The Seventeen Ways to Become a Better Reader

Chapter 2 – Taking the Plunge into Reading

Chapter 3 – Improving Retention

Chapter 4 – Computer Assisted Reading Practice

Chapter 5 – Planning Your Reading Practice

Chapter 6 –List of Computer Programs Designed to Improve Reading Skills