How To Speed Read – 6 Easy Techniques

BY MARK WAYS | LAST UPDATED: JANUARY 14, 2019

Learn How To Speed Read – A Tutorial Teaching 6 Speed Reading Techniques

Reading is a universal activity and certainly one of the most important skills to be able to gain new knowledge or access information. So, how can we organize this process in the most effective and efficient way? This is where speed reading comes into play, and the good news is anyone can learn how to speed read. It’s a powerful asset to expand your knowledge, enhance your learning experience or even boost your career.

This tutorial will show you how to comprehend better while reading faster. You may easily enhance your skills by understanding the powerful combination of speed reading techniques available. An infographic at the end of this post will also summarize some of these core concepts.

Explore three major approaches to get started:

- Traditional offline methods (local classes, books or self-teaching)
- Online Courses (guided)
- Desktop software (guided)
Try it out: This tutorial will encourage you to teach yourself how to speed read. Each chapter will offer additional reading resources that will cover speed reading techniques in more detail.

1. Hand Pacing Technique

Hand pacing is a simple reading improvement technique allowing you to read faster while maintaining a steady level of apprehension.

Have you ever heard of the pointer method? Well most of us learned it during our school days but for some reason we stopped using this technique as we grew up.

The pointer method was developed by the creator of speed reading, Evelyn Wood. It involves moving/sliding the index finger or a pointer across the page and below the sentence you are going to read. This will sharpen your overall focus and speed. Pacing yourself is the quickest way to learn how to speed read.

2. Scanning and Previewing

Scanning and previewing techniques can enhance your skill of quickly capturing the central idea of what you plan to read. This technique will teach you to scan for numbers, names and trigger words.

With time and practice you will up your speed to identify key sentences in a paragraph. Expert speed readers are able to skim and comprehend a whole page within seconds.

When using this technique, make sure to look for items such as lists, points, graphs, indexes and subheadings. Identify these key items before getting into detail.

3. Reading Chunks of Words

Reading groups of words is one of the key skills to gain when learning how to speed read. It is also one of the most time consuming speed reading techniques to learn.

As the name suggest, the technique involves reading chunks of words
rather than individual words. The goal is to reduce the number of “stops” your eyes perform as you read. Once you start taking chunks of words, your comprehension rate and with that your overall reading abilities will improve a great deal.

To get started read this article on reading chunks of words. It provides essential tips and material. Well, the three reading techniques discussed above are meant to speed you up. In the next chapter we will look at some techniques to boost your apprehension and recalling abilities.

4. How To Improve Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the capability to read text, to process it and to apprehend it. This may sound simple, but it is actually not. Understanding can be a difficult concept. The brain processes new knowledge with full cognizance of the existing cognitive structure.

This means that the new knowledge must be related to other knowledge that is already stored in the brain. The way in which you comprehend (or understand) what you read will depend upon the association that is made with the knowledge structure you already have.

Why is it important?
There is no point to read fast if you cannot apprehend the meaning of the text or if you cannot ingrain new information into existing memory structures. However, there is much that you can do to develop your comprehension rate and it will benefit you while learning how to speed read.

How to speed read and boost apprehension?

✓ Improve your vocabulary. In order to understand what we read we need to know the meaning of the words used. However, so many words have a myriad of meanings that depend upon the context within which they are used. Improving your vocabulary, therefore, does entail the memorization of new words and also studying the different contexts within which those words can be used to convey different meanings.

✓ Visualization & memory techniques. Human comprehension depends upon the ability to visualize and memorize. If you master techniques such as brain maps or building a memory palace you will be much better able to visualize and memorize new information and you will most certainly enhance your apprehension in the process. Apart from a better understanding, you will also be able to recall information more reliable.
✓ Take notes and summarize. When you take notes you are forcing yourself to interpret what you read. If you find it very difficult or even impossible to summarize text into short notes you know that you have not fully grasped the text. It is best to summarize only once you have (speed) read a logical section of text that deals with a specific concept.

✓ Keep the subject matter in mind. If you keep the author’s or a chapter’s main subject in mind when you read, you will find it much easier to understand the true meaning of specific words or phrases. For example, if you read a book about machine learning, the use of the term “elegant” will refer to a sophisticated programming technique, not to a well dressed person.

✓ Preview the text. Because comprehension depends a lot on your ability to understand the meaning of words and phrases within their context, you may benefit from skimming the text before you actually start to read. This speed reading technique has been discussed above and will help you to understand the author’s main idea quickly.

✓ Ask yourself questions. After previewing jot down the main questions you want to find an answer to. When you read, frequently questions relating to the text you have read. This will help you to organize your thinking and to verbalize the meaning that you derived from the text. You will find it much easier to relate your new knowledge to existing memory structures.

5. Reverse Bad Reading Habits

To increase the effectiveness of your reading, be aware that certain habits can reduce efficiency. Many develop those bad reading habits as a child during school.

Subvocalization (saying the words in your head) and regression (stepping back in text) are the most common ones. They will often slow you down and have an adverse impact on your apprehension and text processing ability.

You may also face problems when reading in an unsuitable environment with poor light or loud sounds or when you are just tired. However, you can manage these issues quite easily if you are willing to set up the right conditions for your reading or studying.

Just a few tips to tackle bad habits

• Try to tackle habits individually in order to reduce or eliminate
them.
- Skim and scan before you read. Use linear and cross-shaped hand pacing patterns.
- While scanning look for unfamiliar words and deliberately subvocalize them.
- This will help reduce the temptation to subvocalize them later.
- Count numbers, sum a melody or chew gum to reduce subvocalization.
- Resist to go back in text. You will not miss important facts.
- Discipline your eyes. Train them to read smoothly from left to right.

There is a lot of material that you can read on the subject of overcoming bad habits. The University of Alabama’s Center for Academic Success offers a simple list of how to correct these habits.

In the previous paragraphs we covered essential speed reading techniques you can try on your own. In the next ones we will discuss some popular software to assist you further.

6. Learn How To Speed Read - Tools

You can either use software, enroll in an online course or attend a live class to learn how to speed read. This can be a very effective approach as those courses focus on advanced speed reading techniques, exercises, speed tests, and scientific methods to help you get rid of bad habits.

Below are four popular resources that have been found to be helpful and effective by many students around the globe. However, these are just two recommendations, and we encourage you to do your research before enrolling into a class of your choice.

Iris Reading

Iris Reading is one of the most recognized institutions to learn how to read faster. You may book a live class in many cities in the U.S. and Canada. Iris also offers in-person classes in the U.K., India, China, Brazil, Russia or Singapore. Alternatively, you may enroll yourself in one of their online video courses.

7-Speed-Reading

7-Speed-Reading refers to seven learning techniques teaching you how to read effectively. The strategies are particularly designed to facilitate the natural learning curve of students, adult learners and professionals. Most users therefore review the program as effective, interactive and fun.
A great value is the in-depth video training featuring six globally recognized experts. The topics range from memory improvement to handling work load more efficiently to advanced reading improvement techniques.

**Become a SuperLearner**

Become a SuperLearner will not only increase your reading speed but also to boost your memory capabilities. The goal is to combine speed with improved abilities in memory, recalling, retention and apprehension.

SuperLearner is instructed by recognized teachers who themselves have extensive experience in the art of learning, reading and memory improvements. Students will learn to memorize and recall large amounts of information and store them permanently.

**Eye-Hop™ by Alchemy Training Unlimited**

This is a (free) resource to practice word-group-reading either online or offline in a physical format. This tool will help develop your comprehension and overall focus as you will learn to read multiple words at once. It will assist you in becoming faster and focused.

For material please visit Ron Cole’s website. It offers four PDF files for download. Each PDF includes instructions, found at the end of the file. It allows you to set your own pace before progressing to the next level. You can also generate your own exercise sheets there.

**Read Faster - Complementary Tips**

1. **Apply what you read**

You may know how to speed read and consume many books a year. That is good. However, you will need to ingrain all those information delivered through books into your daily life. Otherwise, it becomes useless knowledge.

**Take action**  - Books are tools, and tools are meant to improve a skill. Use skimming and scanning and other approaches to speed read a book
in order to extract the core information and immediately apply those insights to your projects, ideas, habits or activities.

**Review your actions** – Use books to take your notes and come back for brief reviews. Apply regular feedback reviews to evaluate whether you have implemented a new skill or forgot about it again. Keep practicing, and then turn books into action.

**2. Consider a reading speed test**

There are many [online tests](#) available and it can be very beneficial to do one before you actually start learning how to speed read. Below are the steps to rather do a manual test.

A manual test is very simple; just grab a book and a stop watch. Start reading a paragraph and time yourself. You can follow these steps for a quick and easy result:

- Select a book of your choice.
- Choose a paragraph to read.
- Time yourself. Monitor how long it takes to read a complete paragraph.
- Count the words you have just read.
- Consider the time and words as a benchmark you can improve.
- Try to build your speed continuously. Remember to quantify your performance.

Always start at a normal speed as rushing it will decrease accuracy. You may choose paragraphs on different pages to achieve a precise time measure. You can use the results as a measure of performance and can boost your speed while trying different practices.

**3. Relax and train your eye muscles**

Being able to speed read can be compared with physical training in a metaphorical way. Like athletes who develop physical skills to use in their sport, the speed reader needs their eye muscles to be in good condition. Just as with other muscles, the eye muscles also need care and training and this will benefit the reader in many ways.

Eyes can get exhausted very quickly and this makes reading a challenge. A good technique is to give your eyes rest between training or reading sessions. Do not strain the muscles too much because with training you will develop your muscles eventually.

**How to Speed Read - Last but not Least**

This [blog post](#) by Tim Ferris packs the whole “reading-improvement” topic into a 10 minute program, which I personally find really insightful.
Have you got any suggestions about how to speed read? I look forward to hear. Feel free to simply post a comment to share further speed reading techniques. Below is also an infographic with useful tips and some FAQ questions summarizing key insights. Thanks a lot for reading.

Click “Share” buttons below to add infographic to your Pinterest board.

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**Getting Started**

1. Read a comprehensive overview on how to speed read.
2. Watch a video if you prefer visual media.
3. Listen to a podcast if you are an audio learner.
4. Make yourself familiar with common phrases and terms.
5. Test your reading speed. Set your goals.
6. Test your comprehension rate as well.
7. Consider an online course, in-person class or a book.

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**Increase Speed & Comprehension**

**Works instantly**

9. Preview and skim any material.
10. Skim for trigger phrases, numbers and names.
11. Recall the main idea. Set your reading goal.
13. Use your hand/finger/mouse as a pacing tool.
14. Flip page with the hand you are not using for hand pacing.
15. For web reading: check headlines, bold words & bullet lists.

**Needs Exercise**

16. Learn to read chunks of words. Start with 2-3 words.
17. Hum a melody while reading to avoid subvocalization.

19. Learn common prefixes and suffixes to derive meaning faster.
20. Conceptualize and link an image to common words.
22. Use memory techniques to effectively embody knowledge.

**Involves Activity/Motivation**

23. Use mind maps to recall ideas. Review content.
24. Affirmations create a positive attitude. Trust yourself!
24. Affirmations create a positive attitude. Trust your skills.
25. Reduce noise or any distractions.
26. Test new skills or stick to new projects for at least 21 days.
27. Read everything you come across. Practice techniques daily.

**Solutions for Bad Reading Habits**
28. Apply drills to eliminate subvocalization.
29. Learn to read at least 4 words in one eye fixation.
30. Trust yourself and resist regression by keeping reading.

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**Infographic | Speed Reading Tips**

**Speed Reading Tips For Kids**
31. Reading tests are not necessary for kids. Enjoy the fun.
32. Easy methods such as hand pacing or previewing are great.
33. 15 minutes a day is a good time frame for exercises.
34. Keep lessons short and catchy, maximum of one hour.
35. Research books that are suitable for children.
36. Think of a smart and inexpensive reward system.
37. Try to invite/involve friends and kids from the neighborhood.
38. Learning in groups can be very effective.
39. Make a plan on what to teach and how to teach.
40. Explain what you want to accomplish.
41. Warm-up sessions help increase focus.

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**FAQ Questions and Answers - How To Speed Read**

**How to speed read? Quick Tips**
1. Preview and skim material. Set a reading goal.
3. Use your finger, a pen or a mouse as a pacing tool.
4. Read chunks of words. Start with 2-3 phrases then move up.
5. Improve vocabulary to identify words faster.
6. Improve memory skills to better remember and recall information.
7. Get rid of limiting reading habits.

**What is speed reading techniques?**
It is a powerful asset of effective techniques to boost speed, develop better comprehension, reduce regression or to quickly preview material such as books, articles and documents. The most common speed
reading techniques include hand pacing, previewing and chunking.

**What is the meaning of subvocalization?**

Do you pronounce or subvocalize the words when you read them? Subvocalization is recognized as a bad reading habit as it will slow down readers. When learning to speed read, the goal is to eliminate subvocalization and rather visualize information.

**How fast is speed reading?**

To speed read material is processing written material significantly faster than the average reader. There is no specific minimum speed, however, a minimum of 350-400WPM (words per minute) is considered to be reasonable. A well-structured training program can help increase average reading speeds up to 600wpm while keeping comprehension at 80-90%.

**How can I increase my reading speed and comprehension?**

1. Improve your vocabulary. Learn common prefixes and suffixes.
2. Apply visualization & memory techniques.
3. Take notes and summarize. Create mind maps.
4. Keep the subject matter in mind.
5. Preview the text and get the author's main idea.
6. Ask relevant questions before you read.

**Should I read more to read faster?**

Yes, practicing is key, and you will certainly level up the more you apply the techniques to speed read. There’s an ocean of information available to you, and more is added every day. The more you read, the more you know – the more you know, the more successful you can become.

**Is knowing how to speed read an essential 21st century skill?**

Self-education and self-development have proven to be two efficient methods for improving your success potential. No one was born with fully-developed qualifications; these are acquired through training. Knowing how to speed read is one such skill. By mastering this skill, you can see your knowledge database exponentially increase. Read a lot and your chances of succeeding professionally, personally, socially, and financially will instantly increase.

**How to keep up concentration when I speed read?**

Consequently minimize distractions and reduce those activities that may cause disturbance or take your focus away from reading.

- Read without distraction. Turn off television, radio, email and your cell phone.
• Read while sitting in a proper posture, ideally on a chair with your feet touching the ground.
• Take breaks, i.e. speed read in 50 minute chunks with a 10 minute break in between.

Do fast readers use both sides of the brain?
Yes, the left and the right side of the brain are being used simultaneously. The left side controls numerous things including scientific ability, number skills and spoken languages. The right side controls things like creativity, visualization, memorization and imagination. People who know how to use both sides of their brain simultaneously can develop incredible reading speeds and also retain information more efficiently.

Image credits:
Karim Ghantous on Unsplash | Staples eReader Department | Abhi Sharma, Books HD | Andrew Kuznetsov, Wow | Sudhamshu Hebbar, You’re it

Please share this tutorial. If you have further tips about how to speed read effectively, please share your thoughts in the comments below.

FILED UNDER: TUTORIALS

About Mark Ways
I discovered speed reading 10 years ago and now my passion is blogging about new e-learning techniques, software and skills. I'm also keen on photography, traveling, languages and movies. Let's keep in touch!

COMMENTS

Eddie Mattison says
May 25, 2019 at 10:52 am

Seems like reading in “chunks” vs line by line is the better way. Does anyone agree or disagree? Then, how to develop it.

Reply

David says
February 24, 2019 at 3:40 pm
I only wish I would know how to read fast! I’m such a slow reader. It takes me ages to read a few pages, just to give you an idea, in the time it takes me to read about 10 pages my sister can read upwards of 23! And she didn’t even have any sort of training or something. I didn’t even know subvocalization was a bad thing! I always try to say the words in my head because I thought that would help me understand what I read – it seems I was very wrong and this is actually dragging me down, but I’m confident these reading techniques and tips will help me to improve.

Reply

sheila4T says
July 14, 2018 at 4:42 am

I’m grateful you mentioned there are video tutorials and tools to learn to speed read as my husband is not a strong reader and digests information better from videos. Funnily enough I am the opposite. I would zone out and day dream listening to someone speak but I can read all day long, I just want to read faster.

Reply

**Rafael** says
August 22, 2017 at 12:32 pm

I want to try out some of the speed reading techniques suggested in this post. How does this “reading chunks of words” work? How can I learn it? Are there any good resources? Thanks for the tips, much appreciated.

Reply

Mark Ways says
August 22, 2017 at 2:22 pm

Learning to read chunks of words may take some time and practice. You will learn to expand your eye vision and process groups of words rather than individual ones. The idea behind this technique is that word groups can carry a more comprehensive meaning than just individual words. You can start practicing by downloading the Eye-Hop PDF sheets I have mentioned above.
Mike says
January 15, 2017 at 1:31 pm

Thanks, great tips here. I've been wanting to learn how to speed read so it'll definitely help at work and school. I will give those techniques a try and also check out the tutorials.

Reply

Nancy says
November 23, 2016 at 8:29 am

This is by all means a great writing to help us keep up with speed reading. I believe we learned these in school but with time as we get absorbed in work we tend to slow down our reading speed which translates to poor comprehension and less reading, so gaining little knowledge which we miss out in reading.

Reply

omp says
September 24, 2016 at 7:58 am

Great post Mark.

Most important reading techniques to be mastered are skimming and avoiding sub-vocalization.

At higher speeds, comprehension is affected but while reading novels it’s more important to understand and get the concept and jest of it rather than comprehending it word by word.

Various Techniques are fine but it can be fine-tuned and mastered by constant practice.

Reply

Patrick J. says
August 17, 2016 at 5:34 pm
I also wonder why we have stopped using the hand pacing technique. Why aren't we using it more intensely in school and then in college? This is such a simple way to read twice as fast if not faster and you still have a pretty good retention even if the speed is increased. I did not know about scanning and previewing but I have already bookmarked your article on that and will read it. I am averaging about 280 wpm at this moment and would like to increase that because there are so many great books I want to read but there's not enough time for them all.

Reply

Justin says
August 7, 2016 at 5:05 pm

Great tips here Mark. And I've been wanting to learn how to speed read, it'll definitely help at work and school. I will give those techniques a try and check out those tutorials.

Reply

Ghem says
February 5, 2016 at 12:34 pm

Great help for me as a reader. There are some tricks here you posted that increases my knowledge about how to be a more efficient reader. I also like the steps on how to train myself to speed read, which I can def use everyday. Love the techniques.

Thanks.

Reply

Michael Mayers says
November 29, 2015 at 1:57 am

Great post Mark.

You might want to try your hand at one of our Free Classic books at SpeedRead.io/free-classics.

We use a scientifically proven technique called “Rapid Serial Visual Presentation” (or RSVP for short). By presenting words one after the other in the same place it removes the need for your eyes to move from left to right. By avoiding this movement you
can massively increase the speed at which you can read and take in information. In fact, many people are using this technique to read at over 1,000 words per minute which is over five times the average speed at which people read.

Cheers,

Mike

artumus villarreal says

October 21, 2015 at 9:50 am

I started learning to speed read by practicing the following technique to expand my eye vision:

1. I started with one letter at the beginning and end of each page/line and trying to percept them both.
   Example:
   A n

2. After practicing it for a while you may add the next two new letters.
   Example:
   Ab in

3. You practice seeing that then add a third letter.
   Example:
   Abo tin

You keep doing this expanding your “peripheral” vision “seeing” the whole line. I had started these lessons, but lost the book. I am just trying to find a book that teaches that technique or if anyone knows how to obtain a book with that speed reading technique. It was really working, I am just trying to find a book like it.

MareeT says

September 19, 2014 at 8:46 pm

Great post! I like to read and have a very long book list. There are a lot of books I haven’t got to. If I know how to speed read, I’ll be able to read more books. Thanks for writing about the techniques.
Interesting topic. Can you turn it off and on as required? For example, I wouldn’t want to speed read a novel by one of my favourite authors. I would definitely want to subvocalise and enjoy the writing.

However, reports and such would be great candidates for speed reading.

Mark Ways says
September 23, 2014 at 12:21 pm

I wouldn’t necessarily think of turning it on or off, but rather knowing when to apply which technique. When reading novels I hardly apply any of them as I want to hear voices, sounds, reread an interesting passage or get lost at all. Reading non-fiction is different and I apply described methods from previewing to hand pacing to reading several words at once…. 