

# Reading: Speed Reading

Academic Success Center

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When we were initially taught to read, we learned to ‘speak’ the words internally in our heads while our eyes scanned the words. The problem is that people think at faster rates (500 words per minute) while our eyes scan at lower rates (250 words per minute). We read slower than our brains are capable of because we lack practice. When we read slower than our brains are thinking, our minds tend to wander because we may not be fully engaged in the process. This section will address these dynamics.

To train yourself to read faster you need to do exercises that increase your eye speed and thus moving your reading speed closer to the speed that your brain thinks. This exercise should be practiced 15 min per day and done for 10 days with periodic refreshers after that.

Each step is 1 minute, after which count the number of words you read. (Hint: count the number of lines and multiply by 10 for the estimate of words read--comparison between exercises is more important than accurate count.)

1. Start at the beginning of a paragraph and read normally for one minute.
2. Start at the beginning of a paragraph; use your index finger to push your eyes across line of words read as fast as you can for one minute thinking about speed and comprehension. Notice the important words (not "the, and, of...").
3. Start at the beginning again, for another minute, read TWICE as fast, moving your finger faster as you read, do not worry about comprehension.
4. Start at the same place as before and read THREE times as fast (NOT for comprehension, your eyes will read the words, but you are not aiming to understand)
5. For one final minute, read faster and think about comprehension

Almost ALL students will report that their 5<sup>th</sup> round word count is higher than their 1<sup>st</sup> round. The idea is that you will train yourself to read faster. Once you have increased your base speed of reading, you can make additional adaptations to increase speed. For example, you can use a straight edge guide to read 3 lines at a time.