

Reading Techniques

Strategies for improving reading rate and comprehension.

SQ3R METHOD FOR THOROUGH STUDY

- Step 1: Survey
 - Skim through the book and read topical/sub-topical headings and sentences. Read summaries at the end of chapters and books. Try to anticipate what the author is going to say. Write these notes on paper, then look it over to get an overall idea.
- Step 2: Questions
 - Turn paragraph headings into questions (e.g. “Basic Concepts of Reading” to “What are the Basic Concepts of Reading?”). Write these questions out.
- Step 3: Read
 - Read with alertness to answer the questions you came up with. Write notes, in your own words, under each question.
- Step 4: Recall
 - Without looking at your books or notes, mentally visualize, in your own words, the high points of the material immediately upon completing the reading
 - ** More time should be spent on recall than reading
- Step 5: Review
 - Look at your questions, answers, notes and book to see how well you did recall. Finish up with a mental picture of the WHOLE

Adapted from F.P. Robinson. *Effective Study*. New York: Harper and Bros. 1948. Chapter II

STEPS TO FOLLOW IN SKIMMING FOR THE MAIN IDEAS

- Read the title of the selection carefully. Determine what clues it gives you as to what the selection is about. Watch for key words like “causes,” “results,” “effects,” etc., and do not overlook signal words such as those suggesting controversy (“versus”, “pros and cons”), which indicate that the author is planning to present both sides of an argument.
- Look carefully at the headings and other organizational clues. These tip you off to the main points that the author wants you to learn. You may be accustomed to overlooking boldface headings and titles which are the obvious clues to the most important ideas

VARY YOUR READING RATE

A few broad suggestions may help you to select your rate(s) within the particular article:

Decrease speed when you find the following:

1. An unfamiliar word not made clear by the sentence. Try to understand it from the way it's used; then read on and return to it later.
2. Long and uninvolved sentence and paragraph structure. Slow down enough to enable you to untangle them and get an accurate idea of what the passage says.
3. Unfamiliar or abstract ideas. Look for applications or examples which will give them meaning. Demand that an idea "make sense." Never give up until you understand, because it will be that much easier the next time. Find someone to help you if necessary.
4. Detailed, technical material. This includes complicated directions, abstract principles, materials on which you have scant background.
5. Material on which you want detailed retention. The key to memory is organization and recitation. Speed should not be a consideration here.

Increase speed when you find the following:

1. Simple material with few ideas new to you. Move rapidly over the familiar.
2. Unnecessary examples and illustrations. These are included to clarify ideas. If not needed, move over them rapidly.
3. Detailed explanation and elaboration which you do not need.
4. Broad, generalized ideas. These can be rapidly grasped, even with scan techniques. Skip that material which is not suitable for your purpose. While the author may have thought particular information was relevant, his/her reason for writing was not necessarily the same as your reason for reading. Remember to keep your reading attack flexible.

Shift gears from selection to selection. Use low gear when the going is steep; shift into high when you get to the smooth parts. Remember to adjust your rate within a given article according to the type of road you are traveling and to your purposes in traveling it. Most important, remember: You must practice these techniques until a flexible reading rate becomes second nature to you

THE PIVOTAL WORDS

No words are as helpful while reading as the prepositions and conjunctions that guide your mind along the pathways of the author's ideas. Master these words and phrases and you will almost immediately become a better reader. Here's what they are and what they say:

- **Additive words:** "Here's more of the same coming up. It's just as important as what we have already said."
 - Also, further, moreover, and, furthermore, too, besides, in addition
- **Equivalent words:** "It does what I have just said, but it does this too."
 - As well as, at the same time, similarly, equally important, likewise
- **Amplification words:** "I want to be sure that you understand my idea; so here's a specific instance."
 - For example (e.g.), specifically, as, for instance, such as, like
- **Alternative words:** "Sometimes there is a choice; other times there isn't."
 - Either/or, other than, neither/nor, otherwise

- **Repetitive words:** "I said it once, but I'm going to say it again in case you missed it the first time."
 - Again, in other words, to repeat, that is (i.e.)
- **Contrast and Change words:** "So far I've given you only one side of the story; now let's take a look at the other side."
 - But, on the contrary, still, conversely, on the other hand, though, despite, instead of, yet, however, rather than, regardless, nevertheless, even though, whereas, in spite of, notwithstanding
- **Cause and effect words:** "All this has happened; now I'll tell you why."
 - Accordingly, since, then, because, so, thus, consequently, hence, therefore, for this reason
- **Qualifying words:** "Here is what we can expect. These are the conditions we are working under."
 - If, although, unless, providing, whenever
- **Concession words:** "Okay! We agree on this much."
 - accepting the data, granted that, of course
- **Emphasizing words:** "Wake up and take notice!"
 - above all, more important, indeed
- **Order words:** "You keep your mind on reading: I'll keep the numbers straight."
 - Finally, second, then, first, next, last
- **Time words:** "Let's keep the record straight on who said what and especially when."
 - Afterwards, meanwhile, now, before, subsequently, presently, formerly, ultimately, previously, later
- **Summarizing words:** "We've said many things so far. Let's stop here and pull them together."
 - for these reasons, in brief, in conclusion, to sum up

DIGITAL RESOURCES

1. [Spritz](#) is an app that claims to increase reading speed and focus by adjusting word position and color use.
2. [ZapReader](#) is a free online program designed for speed reading by allowing the user to cut and paste text to be read into a box that will show the text one word at a time. However, since the rate of the word presentation can be adjusted by the user, this tool can be helpful for readers who benefit from having words shown individually for spacing/reduced visual stimulation interface.
3. [Spreeder](#) is a free online program designed for speed reading by allowing the user to cut and paste text to be read into a box that will show the text one word at a time. However, since the rate of the word presentation can be adjusted by the user, this tool can be helpful for readers who benefit from having words shown individually for spacing/reduced visual stimulation interface.
4. [Beeline Reader](#) is an online program that can help make reading faster and/or easier by using a color gradient that guides your eyes from the end of one line to the beginning of the next.
5. [Rewordify.com](#) is a free, online software that simplifies complex vocabulary into simpler vocabulary and thus might create "bite sized" snippets of dense reading content for previewing purposes.

6. [Text Compactor](#): "Text Compactor is a free online summarization tool was created to help struggling readers process overwhelming amounts of information. However, the general approach will help any busy student, teacher, or professional."

Resources provided by Alicia Brandon

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Harvard Report on Reading](#)
- [Active Reading Strategies](#) (Princeton University)
- [How to Read a Primary Source](#) (University of Iowa)
- [10 Reading Comprehension Strategies](#) (Purdue University)