

Eastern Mennonite University
Academic Support Center

Reading to Increase Your Speed

Reading is an important source of learning. Reading rapidly is not merely a useful skill—it is a **must**. If you do not read swiftly and efficiently, you just cannot keep up to date on current events and homework assignments as well as your reading for enjoyment.

Six hints—easy in themselves, **but requiring practice**—can speed up your reading. Simple practice for 15 minutes a day and you will be surprised at the results.

1. **Swing your eyes** – your reading speed depends first on what we call your “span of recognition” or “the number of words you absorb at a glance.”
2. **Go down the middle** – for reading of narrow columns (newspaper width), fix your eyes on the middle of a column and read down rapidly, trying to see everything from left and right. If you draw a straight line down the center of the column it helps. You will be surprised at how much you can take in.
3. **Stretch yourself** – during the 15 minute practice each day, read faster than you comfortably can.
4. **Raise your focus** – phrase-reading is helped immensely if you will focus your eyes just above, rather than directly on the line of type.
5. **Anticipate what is coming** – the sense of the sentence will often telegraph whole words instantly, just from their first syllable or two.
Remember: the words are merely symbols for the author’s thought.
Anticipating the author’s line of reasoning will speed your reading.
6. **Know your reading speed** – count the words in several lines, take an average and multiply it times the average lines per page. Put this “average words per page” in the front of each book you are reading. Time yourself. See if you can do better each time you read. Keep a record of your progress in front of each book.

These tips will pay big dividends if you will practice them daily. In all your reading, for pleasure or otherwise, consciously think of these tips and use them. Before you know it, your reading will greatly improve and become much more enjoyable.

-taken from “Reading to Increase Your Speed” by Joyce Hedrick