

Introduction

No matter how quickly or slowly you read now, you can read much more rapidly by adopting the speed-reading techniques described in this book. You can also comprehend, retain, and recall what you read much more successfully. You can become an efficient and effective reader, one who reads with confidence and greater understanding. You can read more in the time you devote to reading and get more from the articles and books you read.

This book represents all that I know and have discovered about speed reading during my 40 years as a speed-reading instructor and developer of speed-reading software. I have had the great pleasure of seeing my students' reading speeds and comprehension improve dramatically, and I have also seen them derive greater pleasure from reading. These goals — increasing your reading speed and your pleasure from reading — are what this book is all about.

About This Book

The science (some would say art) of speed reading is about 100 years old. Consequently, theories abound as to what makes a good speed reader and how to become a speed reader. This book takes a very basic approach to the subject — I believe speed reading is efficient reading. You don't have to be a wizard or master arcane techniques to be a speed reader. All you have to do is understand the mechanics of reading and then apply yourself more efficiently to exercising those mechanics when you read. This book shows you how to do that.

Speed Reading For Dummies is for people who have little or no background in speed reading, as well as for experienced speed readers who want to hone their speed-reading skills. It offers many strategies, tips, and tricks to improve your reading speed and includes numerous exercises to give you hands-on practice in speed-reading techniques. It also explains the how and why of speed-reading mechanics so that you understand not just what to do when you speed read but also why you do it.

A note about the exercises: If at first you don't succeed, try again. Everyone grasps new material at a different rate — don't get discouraged if you don't do as well as you expect the first time out of the gate. You can apply these exercises to just about any reading

material to get additional practice; as I mention elsewhere in this book, newspapers are perfect for speed-reading practice, so consider starting there.

You don't have to read this book from start to finish — unless you want to, of course. I wrote and organized *Speed Reading For Dummies* so that you can start reading it anywhere you want. Consult the table of contents or “How This Book Is Organized” later in this introduction to find the speed-reading topic that interests you.

Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book easier to read, I've adopted these conventions:

- ✓ I *italicize* new terms in the text the first time I introduce them and then follow them closely with an easy-to-understand definition.
- ✓ Steps in the exercises are numbered and appear in **boldface** text. Follow the boldface instructions to complete the exercises.
- ✓ Web addresses appear in `monofont`.
- ✓ Though many use the term *vocalization* to mean “reading aloud,” for the purposes of this book I define vocalization as “speaking or hearing words as you read them.”
- ✓ Some exercises include long text pieces for you to practice on. I label these pieces to correspond with the exercise number (so Practice Text 7-1 goes with Exercise 7-1). For exercises that have multiple text pieces (such as those that ask you to read the same essay in different formats), I add a letter to each Practice Text heading (for example, Practice Text 2-1a and Practice Text 2-1b).

What You're Not to Read

I've written this book so you can find the information you need easily and quickly. All the chapters provide you with important information, but the sidebars offer greater detail or tidbits of information that you can skip if you like. I encourage you to read this information along with the regular text, but if you want to focus on the main points of the chapters, you can always come back to these shaded sections another time.

Foolish Assumptions

Forgive me, but I've made a few foolish assumptions about you, the reader of this book. I assume the following:

- ✔ You want to read anything and everything more quickly.
- ✔ You want to better comprehend and retain the books, articles, and Web pages you read every day.
- ✔ You feel overwhelmed by the amount of info you have to read for work or school and want a way to quickly and effectively get through all of it.
- ✔ You've heard a few tidbits about speed reading and are intrigued by the topic or wonder whether what you've heard is true.
- ✔ You want a plainspoken guide that trains you to speed read without a lot of fuss so you can quickly master speed-reading techniques.

How This Book Is Organized

Following is a short summary of each part of *Speed Reading For Dummies*. I invite you to use this summary as a quick guide to speed reading topics that interest you. Choose the speed-reading topic that interests you and have at it.

Part I: Introducing Speed Reading

Part I lays the groundwork for understanding what speed reading is and how you can read more efficiently. Chapter 1 explains what happens in your brain and other parts of your anatomy when you speed read and the skills you need to be a speed reader. Chapter 2 delves into two bad habits — vocalizing and regressing — that keep you from reading quickly and then shows you how to break these habits. In Chapter 3, I look into eye fixations, vision span, and other reading mechanics to help you understand how to be a speed reader. Chapter 4 offers a number of speed reading exercises to give you a sense of the different skills you need to develop (and can develop with the exercises in Part II).

Part II: Focusing on the Fundamentals

Part II explores the core fundamentals of speed reading. First, Chapter 5 gives you an opportunity to take your first speed-reading tests so that you know where you stand. Then in Chapter 6 you take your first steps down the road to reading more than one word at a time as you discover how to widen your vision span vertically and horizontally when you read. Chapter 7 gives you practice in reading for units of meaning so that you read not only more than one word at a time but also one entire thought at a time and increase your comprehension, retention, and recall.

Part III: Advancing Your Speed-Reading Skills

Part III takes you to a higher speed-reading realm. To reinforce your speed-reading skills, Chapter 8 offers exercises that have you read text in ever wider columns so you can challenge your ability to read more words per eye fixation. Chapter 9 presents techniques to help you read aggressively with heightened concentration. In Chapter 10, you go above and beyond the normal speed-reading skills — this chapter explains how to skim, scan, and preread. Chapter 11 explains some refined speed-reading skills, including how to recognize the essence of a paragraph, follow the author's thought patterns, and skip subordinate clauses in your reading.

Part IV: Improving Your Comprehension

Part IV looks at how to improve your comprehension, retention, and recall. Because having a large vocabulary is essential to being a speed reader, Chapter 12 shows how to expand your vocabulary. Chapter 13 explores a potpourri of speed-reading tasks, including encouraging children to speed read; speed reading standardized tests, textbooks, and newspapers; and increasing your reading pleasure.

Part V: The Part of Tens

Each of the chapters in Part V offers advice for being a better speed reader. Chapter 14 offers quick tips for improving your speed reading. Chapter 15 presents eye exercises for expanding your reading vision and seeing after your eye health, and Chapter 16 shows you how to make your speed reading skills permanent.

Part VI: Appendixes

You thought you were done, right? Not so fast — Part VI offers two appendixes. Appendix A lists the 2,000 most common words in the English language so you can be sure you know these all-important words. Appendix B provides a worksheet to help you track your progress on various exercises in this book.

Icons Used in This Book

To help you get the most out of this book, I've placed icons here and there. Here's what the icons mean:



Next to the Tip icon, you find tricks of the trade designed to make you a better speed reader.



Where you see the Warning icon, tread carefully: These icons alert you to common speed-reading mistakes and errors.



Remember icons mark juicy facts that bear remembering. When you see this icon, prick up your ears.

Where to Go from Here

Where should you start reading? Anywhere your curiosity takes you. However, a couple of good starting points are Chapter 2, which describes bad reading habits you must overcome to be a speed reader, and Chapter 3, which looks at the mechanics of speed reading. Wherever you start, good luck in your speed-reading adventures!