
Easy Steps to Increase Your Reading Speed and Comprehension

How should you start reading a fiction book? Well... from the start. How should you start reading a textbook? Not necessarily from the start. Why? We're going to explain the answer to this, while also covering some great tips to increase your reading speed.

Get perspective before diving in Textbooks are written to teach and inform students in-depth about a particular topic. You are not going to ruin any plot spoilers by skipping to the end! Comprehension, memorizing and learning is all about observing the information. Passively reading a textbook and high-lighting every second sentence often leads to poor comprehension levels. This is how I suggest you read a textbook:

1. Read the chapter summaries

FIRST: Most textbooks contain summaries at the end of each chapter. These can give you a great high-level context of what the chapter is about.

2. Read the chapter questions: If there are questions at the end of the chapter then read these. You can start figuring out the answers as you read through the chapter in more detail, which will improve your observation.
3. Read headings and diagrams/illustrations: Now quickly flick through the pages of the chapter, while observing the headings and illustrations.
4. Start reading the chapter: Start reading the chapter in detail.
5. Go back over the chapter summaries and questions.
6. Flick back to the most important topics OR parts that you are having difficulty understanding. Make a note of these. It's better to view a textbook as a detailed reference book rather than a regular reading book. Although it's great to cover everything, the main objective should be to absorb information of highest importance first. Chapter summaries are particularly useful as they are forced to be concise. You will get a very good indication of the most important information by reading these first. Once you know what you are supposed to read, the next step is figuring out how to speed up reading it.

Guide your eyes with a pointer Kids often use their fingers to track through sentences while they are reading them. The truth is that we should have never stopped doing this.

1. Use a pen, knitting needle, or chopstick (I'm going to refer to this as your 'pointer' from now on) and guide your eyes as you are reading. If you don't have any of these then just use your finger.
2. Force yourself to move the pointer a little faster than your regular reading speed. This will help condition yourself to read a little faster. Guiding your eyes actually helps you train yourself to be a better reader. It will dramatically help with the next few tips.
3. Stop voicing the words in your head People generally voice the words in their head as they are reading them. This slows down reading speed dramatically. You can speed up your reading dramatically while keep comprehension levels high by trying to read text

without your inner narration. You don't need to imagine the words being spoken in order to understand what you are reading. Using your pointer, make a conscious effort to silence your inner monologue while you are reading. Reading a little faster than usual can help this. At the start, try to forget about reading comprehension. You might be surprised at how quickly you can start to read normally like this.

4. Stop back tracking

Back tracking is an unnecessary killer of reading speed. How many times have you interrupted the flow of your reading by constantly going back over sentences? You can train yourself to stop doing this by using a pointer. Forget about reading comprehension at the start. Keep your reading flow consistent and don't allow yourself to backtrack. You will often find that the answers to your questions are in subsequent sentences. Not letting yourself backtrack will also force you to concentrate more when reading. Of course, certain difficult texts will require a certain element of backtracking.

However try to at least limit it to every few sentences or sections. At the end of the chapter or section you can allow yourself to go back over information. Oftentimes, you may have already answered your own question by the time you have gotten to that section. You may also have much better context of the overall information then also. It's usually much better to read a chapter twice with decent comprehension, than to read it once with bad flow and constant backtracking. Both could take around the same time!5. You don't need to start at the first word. Look straight ahead. Observe objects to the left and right of your field of vision without changing the position of your eyes whatsoever. Peripheral vision is very effective. You are able to process and take in information about things that you are not looking at directly. You can use the same practice when reading. Start with your pointer on the second or third word of the line and move onto the next line when you've gotten to the second or third last word of that line. You will still be able to take all of the words in. You will be lowering the amount of movement required from your eyes in the process, which helps to speed up your reading.

Advanced Speed Reading

There are many courses and apps available to help you increase your reading speed. There are also advanced methods where you read in different patterns and take in multiple lines at once. There is a lot of potential to these techniques. However, when it comes to textbooks which have difficult and technical information, it's uncertain whether these types of advanced methods actually work. If you are finding the above tips useful then be sure to check out some good books on the subject. Summary Don't just brand yourself as a slow or average reader. You can really increase your speed using some simple techniques and sticking to them. Approaching how you read your textbook can also dramatically change your comprehension. Remember, you don't always have to start at the start!