Special Report on Speed Reading

Breaking the Sub-Vocalization Barrier

80 100 200 250 600 1000 1500 2000
WORDS PER MINUTE

Is Speed Reading Possible?

Can I save my children from intellectual mediocrity?

by MICHAEL FORD

Monday Rush

It's Monday morning. Julie can't be late for class. There is no time for her to relax. She rushes to the subway and takes a seat. The other passengers are starring blankly straight ahead. Suddenly, Julie remembers that she was supposed to read the first chapter in her history book. She pulls out her book opens it to the first chapter. She flips a page. Then the second, third, -- page twenty, -- two hundred. Before she realizes it, the subway doors open and she has finished the entire book.

Fact or Fiction

Is this a dream or science fiction? Can someone actually read a book in 30 minutes? First, let's ask where the idea of speed reading originated. A woman named Evelyn Wood turned in an 80 page paper to her college professor expecting him to read and return it the next day. To her surprise he read the entire paper in seconds and graded it immediately. She was stunned. How could anyone read so much so fast? Her professor was one of a select few people at the time. He was a natural speed reader. Evelyn Wood went on to study this phenomena and eventually founded a speed reading institute in Australia. That was 40 years ago. Since then, speed reading has become popular in many countries. However, for a long time the technique remained almost unknown in the USA.

Air Force Research

A device called a tachistoscope was used during WWII to help fighter pilots identify aircraft silhouettes and to determine how quickly they could read indicators and button labels. The device flashed an image on a projection screen for a fraction of a second. Psychologists and educational specialists working on visual acuity created an experiment where the images were gradually reduced in size and the flash speed was increased. An average person could identify small images of different planes when flashed on the screen for only one-five-hundredth of a second.

The U.S. Air Force modified the system by changing the images to single words. Then up to four words flashed simultaneously on the screen at rates of one five-hundredth of a second. The participants were able to recognize and understand the words. This experiment demonstrated that, with some practice, words can be recognized at much higher speeds than normal reading rates. The Air Force experiments showed that words can be recognized and understood as visual images at extremely high speeds.

Misconceptions

Unfortunately, the term speed reading received a black eye in the 1990's when a number of unscrupulous companies made outrageous claims about their speed reading books and products. These were often combined with useless memory enhancement packages and sold by snake oil salesmen who exaggerated the benefits that their limited and unresearched systems could produce. Many of the systems promoted completely different methods which often conflicted with each other. Even today we see some charlatans pushing memory systems that teach the old and useless memory-map concept or photo reading which has no real use. These systems relied on pseudo-science claims that were so far out, they make

crystal healing look like cutting edge science. Some unblinkingly claimed the subconscious could extract unnoticed content from the printed page. Confusion and frustration resulted when people tried to follow their bad advice. In spite of these obstacles, speed reading is making a comeback. Today we have a better understanding of how speed reading works in the brain. New and improved teaching techniques and the ability to use computers for training have made speed reading a hot topic again.

Before we see what speed reading is, let's look at what speed reading is not. Speed reading is not skimming. Skimming is an inaccurate reading method. Imagine trying to skim the instructions for your new hair-dryer and thinking it said 'use in shower' when it actually said 'do not use in shower'. Missing that all important word, *not*, changes the entire meaning. Skimming simply does not work. Speed reading is not skimming. A speed reader actually reads every word.

Speed reading is not pushing harder. Anyone can push harder to read faster but this only works for a few sentences before falling back to regular speed. Speed reading is a technique that allows you to read an entire magazine or book at speeds two to ten times faster than average reading speed.

Some speed reading systems go to great lengths to teach hand motion techniques or eye movement techniques. Research conducted during the development of Speed Reader-X® has not shown these techniques to work in themselves. Some people find hand motions distracting while others use hand motions to stay focused. The best rule about hand motion is to use it if it helps and forget it otherwise. There is no magic hand motion that will increase your reading speed. Books can spend chapters explaining eye movement patterns. You move your eyes all day every day. It is not something that requires practice. Eye motions will come naturally.

Speed Readers

Speed reading has been part of big business and government for years. It has been taught to executives of many major companies such as IBM, Microsoft, Xerox, and Hewlett Packard. Even presidents have been speed readers including John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, and Jimmy Carter. President Carter took speed reading lessons while at the white house and he read two books per week even with his Presidential duties.

Reading Speeds

According to SpeedReaderX.com, the average person reads around 250 words per minute. This is the speed that most people speak and it is also the speed of the little voice in your head that pronounces words as you read. Speed readers can read from 600 to 1500 words per minute or faster.

It is not uncommon for people to immediately double their reading speed when first learning speed reading techniques. Children eight years and older are the best candidates to learn speed reading. At this age they have a fairly large vocabulary and are familiar with reading. Speed reading becomes more difficult for adults. Just like learning a foreign language comes easy to children, so does speed reading. Adults have been reading the old fashioned way much longer so it takes a little more practice for them to learn a new reading technique. Adults can still benefit from speed reading. They simply have to put a little more effort into it.

Speed reading can provide many benefits. It makes children want to read more. Speed reading fills a child's short attention span by fully immersing them in the material. They actually enjoy reading. This makes children much more likely to read for pleasure. Many studies have shown that children who read perform better in school and to have fewer behavioral problems.

ADD/ADHD/Dyslexia

People with ADD, ADHD, and Dyslexia have trouble reading because these conditions make them right brain dominant. Most people are left brain dominant when it comes to reading. Speed reading uses the visual centers of the right side of the brain. This makes learning speed reading easier for these otherwise disadvantaged people.

George Stancliffe, founder of The American Speed Reading Project, has reported success in teaching speed reading to students that have ADD, ADHD, and Dyslexia.

Mr. Stancliffe said, "...many people with ADD or Dyslexia find speed reading easier than normal reading. Their brains take to the new, visual intake of words much more easily." He continued to say, "If you have a child who may have either ADD or Dyslexia, and you want him/her to be a better reader, one of the best things that you could do is to teach him/her to speed read."

The Secret

Now we know how big this speed reading secret is. It reaches all the way to the Whitehouse. So how does it work? The whole concept is actually quite simple. We learn to read in the first grade. By the second grade we recognize whole words. We learn more words and some grammar, but that is the end of the teaching process. From this point on, we are effectively reading at a first or second grade level for

the rest of our lives.

The human brain can take in information much faster than this. When you read this page, you are likely seeing one or two words at a time. But when you look at a friends face you do not look at individual features to determine who you are looking at. You see their entire face and you immediately recognize them. The brain processes images much faster than it can process words. When you watch a movie, you take in massive amounts of visual information. When a car zooms by on the big screen, do you say to yourself 'C-A-R, car'? Of course not. You see it and you know what it is. You do not have to sound it out or hear it in your head to know what you are seeing. But, when you see the word 'car', the little voice in your head says 'C-A-R, car'. This sub-vocalization slows reading to a snail's pace. To speed read, you must learn to see words as images. You must re-learn to process what you read with the right side of your brain instead of the left side.

Speed reading is a technique that allows you to take in the printed word just like you take in images while watching a movie. You learn to change how you view words so they are absorbed as images by the right side of the brain instead of using the voice in your head with the left side. This completely changes how your brain processes information.

Bored Brains

How many times have you read a page and by the end realized you had no idea what you just read? This happens because the brain becomes bored with the slow reading pace and tunes out that little voice. Your brain wants to go faster than the voice in your head can read. This sub-vocalization is creating a reading speed limit.

Simply silencing this voice can dramatically increase your reading speed. You are switching the reading responsibility from the left side of your brain to the right side. You must switch from using the slow auditory center to the visual center of the brain.

Sub-vocalization is still important in the understanding of complex concepts, but it is not necessary and is undesirable for most of what we read. E-mail, magazine articles, and news articles simply do not require deep comprehension to understand. Subjects like mathematics, philosophy and complex concepts still benefit from speed reading techniques. They are useful in reviews and summaries of these topics.
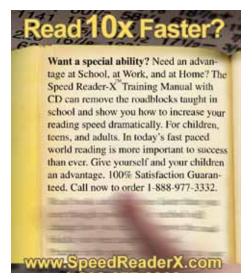
Novels are read for enjoyment and are usually read in real time as if the events are happening in the reader's head. The voice in your head becomes the narrator. Zooming through lengthy descriptions that would otherwise cause the story to drag makes the overall novel reading experience more enjoyable. The reader can then return to normal reading speeds for the interesting parts of the novel.

Speed reading is always a useful tool for any type of reading. It is used when appropriate and gives way to normal reading when deeper understanding is needed.

Skeptics

There are some people who are still anti-speed-reading. This is not based on any modern facts or first hand experience,

Silencing the inner voice can dramatically increase reading speed

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but on their initial gut reaction when they first heard of speed reading or on their experience from one of the bad systems in the 1990's.

It is important to be wary of skeptics who claim they have tried some or all speed reading programs and have failed. These people often make claims without going into details or citing methods they have tried. They do not reveal how long they tried the programs or if they followed the recommended practice sessions seriously.

They frequently misapply speed reading techniques then claim failure without mentioning the fact they are reading the book upside down. They claim they cannot remember what they read at 2,500 words per minute but, forget to mention they have not developed the skill to read at that speed. They try to use maximum speed techniques on complex material which is contrary to the teachings of modern speed reading methods. Most of these people will be extremely negative towards speed reading and try to convince others it is a fake or a scam. These people often refer to the older snake oil systems from the 90's which provide a rich source for skeptics. When it comes to modern methods their normal response is, "They are all the same." That means the skeptic never honestly gave a serious training program a chance.

Comprehension rates determine how much we understand of what we read. It is easy to have 100% comprehension when reading a three word sentence. Longer articles or books may have unfamiliar words or concepts. The brain also fades in and out during slow reading. This results in less than full comprehension by any reading method.

Comprehension levels under 50%* are generally cited by skeptics as a failure in speed reading yet, this level is not uncommon in normal reading tests of high school and junior high children when reading 6th grade to adult level materials. Low comprehension for extremely high reading speeds is often cited as a reason for its failure, but this assertion ignores how modern speed reading works. Reading speed varies depending on the material. Maximum reading speed is not used constantly. This is the same as normal reading. You read faster when you need less comprehension and slower when you

Speed Reading is a skill that takes practice.

need more understanding.

Speed reading is a structured process which calls for some materials, such as text books, to be read at high speed for familiarization, then a lower speed, and then reviewed at the highest possible speed. A 50% comprehension rate when reading 2500 words per minute is excellent. At this reading rate the reader can read an entire book twice in less time than they could read one chapter at a normal rate. On the second reading the comprehension rate can increase from 75% to 90%. That is a massive increase over normal 50% reading comprehension when slow reading and it takes less time. With practice, comprehension at lower speeds, 600 to 1000 words per minute, can meet or exceed regular comprehension rates.

Skeptics often target systems that claim 10,000 words per minute. Such outrageous numbers do make easy targets. Those making 10,000 word per minute claims often fail to mention that comprehension at that speed is 0% to 5%, which is no different from skimming. Reading at 10,000 words per minute would be like watching a movie on fast forward. You get the idea but not the understanding. This rate may be perfectly acceptable if you are looking for some specific information in a long report but, not if you want to remember what you are reading. Rates of 600 to 1500 words per minute are more common and provide the best speed/comprehension balance.

Retention is important. There would be no point in speed reading if you could not remember what you read. This is where many of the products from the snake oil salesmen fell short. People learned basic speed reading techniques but could not remember what they read. Retention and comprehension are actually improved by speed reading when it is done correctly. This only happens after the reader becomes comfortable with new techniques used in speed reading. It takes practice to reach this level. When a child first learns to read, he or she has little or no comprehension. Only after the basic mechanics of reading are practiced and mastered can a child

begin to understand and comprehend. It is the same with those learning speed reading. Master the speed techniques first, then build comprehension. Fortunately, you can use speed reading methods side by side with normal reading methods to gain the benefits of both until you master speed reading. After the brain is re-trained to take in written words visually, it actually becomes easier to recall and understand what is being read.

Asian Genius

The 'Asian Genius' stereotype is still common even though it is not politically correct. However, it is still a statistical fact that many Asian children do tend to perform well in English speaking schools. What is the difference between Asian children and American children? Asian children learn to read a character based language such as Chinese or Japanese first. Many of them naturally read by character recognition. They are later taught English around age eight to twelve. Those Asian children who recognize characters can naturally carryover character recognition and recognize English words in a visual way. Instead of trying to pronounce them, they see words as images just like their native character based languages. This means a very high percentage of Asian children naturally speed read.

Training Products

New research has updated speed reading techniques since Evelyn Wood's discovery of speed reading in the 1950's. Computers now make it easier to learn and practice speed reading. The original books or audio programs on speed reading required you to time yourself while reading passages, write down the results, and repeat this process many times. Some of the older mechanical devices from the 1950's were placed beside an open book and they used a long rotating screw and a bar that moved down a book page to "help" you practice speed reading and time you. They seem quite archaic when compared to modern software trainers.

Research during the development of the Speed Reader-X speed reading software showed that most people skipped over these sections which negated the effectiveness of these early speed reading books.

With computer training software, the computer takes care of the timing and keeps track of your progress. The computer training programs show charts and statistics of your reading speed so you can see your progress. They also increase the difficulty as you progress and your skills improve. These new techniques and improvements in teaching methods make learning speed reading much easier and more reliable. New products that use the latest techniques such as Speed Reader-X are among the leaders in the field of computer training software.

Mastering the Skill

Speed reading is a skill. It is a skill that takes practice. It is also a skill that can make a profound difference in a person's life. Very few people are natural speed readers, but almost anyone can learn the skills needed. Speed reading may not be for everyone, just as learning a foreign language is not for everyone. Today there are inexpensive software programs that make it easy and fun to practice speed reading. Speed reading results vary from person to person and can depend on many factors, not the least of which is the amount of effort put into it. Even if someone does not reach the higher 1500 word or more speeds, they can greatly benefit from simply doubling their reading speed.

Children stand to benefit the most, especially those with certain learning disabilities. Adults willing to learn a new skill can also benefit. Speed reading is more than simply reading fast. When proper techniques are ignored or remain unpracticed, the results can be disappointing. When the techniques of modern speed reading are applied and used correctly, the results can be astonishing.

Would you like to see this kind of positive change in your life? In your career? In the

lives of your children? Don't settle for an average job, average life, or average opportunities. Give yourself an advantage that sets you apart from those around you. You have an opportunity to change the course of your life or the lives of your children with the advantages speed reading offers. Now that you know how it works and what a profound affect it can have on your life, you can't stop here. You must at least try it.

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I know first hand how speed reading can improve your life, the lives of young ones in school, and how it can impact your career even if you only turn on this ability once in a while. I know you want to give yourself and your children every advantage in this high speed information based society and I am handing you the keys to a new future right now. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Go to www.SpeedReaderX.com right now and reserve your Speed Reading training system.

I know what this program can mean to your life.

<div align="right">--Michael Ford</div>

*Comprehension numbers derived from Reading More, Understanding Less - Research on speed reading and comprehension Psychology Today, March, 1987 by Jeff Meer