Quick Tips for Better Reading

Attitude
You’ll read better if you want to read better and if you like to read. Having a positive attitude (wanting to understand and remember) is valuable in developing good reading skills.

Approach
Good readers automatically vary their approach to reading by

• reviewing what they already know about the subject
• previewing the heading and quickly looking over the introduction or first paragraph
• looking for the main topic sentence of each paragraph always thinking, “What’s the author’s main idea?”

Be flexible
Be clear about your purpose for reading; your purpose determines your reading approach. The best reading occurs when you’re flexible with your approach. Good readers constantly decide how important a word, a paragraph, or an idea is to the passage.

Determine difficulty
Good readers recognize if something will be easy or difficult to read. They immediately try to find the main sentence or main idea of each paragraph. They vary their reading strategy according to how difficult the material is.

Listen to your internal clock
Most of us have certain times of the day when our bodies and minds function more efficiently. If you learn better at 7:00 p.m. than at 10:00 a.m., adjust your schedule so you can read during your best learning time.

Be comfortable and undistracted
Read in a well-lighted place, and try to read in the same place each day. Eliminate as many distractions as possible. Turn off electronic devices and move them away from your study area.

Don’t daydream
Avoid daydreaming. For good comprehension, your mind needs to stay focused on what you’re reading. Try to keep a strong image of the reading topic in your mind, fitting new information into the picture as you proceed.

Take care of your eyes

It’s very important that your eyes are cared for and not strained. Be sure to have regular check-ups with an optometrist or an ophthalmologist. If glasses or contacts are prescribed for reading, be sure to wear them.

If your eyes become tired, stop at a convenient spot such as a heading, paragraph break, or anywhere you can return to quickly. Focus your eyes across the room for a few seconds before returning to the material.

Read at your best rate

The average adult reads about 150-350 wpm. Studies show that real reading is difficult past 900-1,000 wpm, since you cannot see each word at those speeds. However, by using cognitive strategies you can comprehend main ideas at faster rates. Your ideal speed will vary depending on you, your material, and your purpose.

Vary your speed

Vary your reading speed and your strategy according to your purpose and the type of reading material. Practice reading faster with magazines and other leisure reading.

Preview

Before you start reading, preview, or look over quickly, what you’re going to read. Previewing helps you set a purpose for your reading and helps your mind prepare to link new information to what you already know.

Scan

Scanning or looking for very specific information is a good way to read reference books or articles when you only need to find a small or specific fact.

Avoid excess movements

Avoid moving your head across the page with each word or sentence. Your only head movement should be downward, as your eyes move quickly across and down the page.

Avoid subvocalizing
Reading aloud - or reading aloud in your mind (called subvocalizing) - is ineffective. Reading aloud causes you to fixate on single words instead of the passage’s meaning. It also slows you down because you focus more on lip movements than meaning.

**Don’t point**
Avoid pointing to each word as you read. Train your eyes to do the work.

**Pace yourself**
An index card can be used as a pacing device. Use a card without lines. Move it down the page covering the lines as you read. This will help you read faster since you can’t regress (read backwards).

**Turn pages quickly**
Keep your hand at the bottom of the page, ready to turn the page quickly. You may even want to use your hand as a pacing device, moving it quickly down the page in an “S” pattern, forcing yourself to take in groups of words at a time.

**Group words**
Reading one word at a time is very ineffective. You’ll read faster and understand more if you group words logically. Try to read with fewer stops (fixations), trying to take in more words at one stop. Grouping words improves comprehension.

**Relate new information to old**
Try to relate new information to information you already know. The more knowledge you bring to the reading, the more meaningful it will be to you, the more likely it will make sense to you, and the more likely you will remember and use it later.

**Predict**
Predicting the meaning and the importance of a reading is a valuable part of good comprehension.

Permission to duplicate this material was granted by Ms. Sharon Green, Coordinator of the Office of Academic Support, Niagara University.