

Speed Reading

Depending on which source you trust, experts and studies indicate that the average reader reads around 200-400 words per minute, while a college student or high-level business executive may read 400-600 words per minute.

In terms of how fast your reading can become, there is some controversy. The argument centers around whether, and how much, comprehension is lost the faster you read. Obviously, comprehension is important when it comes to reading research studies and medical literature.

While some speed reading courses claim you can increase your reading to well over 1,000 words per minute, researcher Keith Rayner suggests that full comprehension at speeds over 500 words per minute is unlikely. (<http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/1998-11174-004>).

Regardless of the specific numbers, increasing your reading speed even by 100-200 words per minute can literally save you hours every week.

So, to get started, you need to have a baseline. What is your current reading speed?

According to *The Wall Street Journal*:

- Average 5th Grader: 153 WPM
- Average Adult: 250 WPM
- Average Speed Reader: 650 WPM

Test your speed at FreeReadingTest.com:

- Your initial reading speed: _____
- Your comprehension score: _____

There are three primary techniques for increasing reading speed:

1. **Don't subvocalize.** Most of us mentally voice the words in our heads as we read. This limits the speed to roughly the speed we can speak. But, you don't actually need to speak the words to comprehend them when reading. It's a habit most of us pick up based on learning to read by sounding out words. It is a habit you can break.
2. **Track along with your finger** (or mouse cursor if reading online). This doesn't increase speed so much as it helps keep you from losing momentum and focus as you increase your speed, which in turn, helps you to maintain higher comprehension.
3. **Use your peripheral vision.** There's more on this technique both on the WSJ site and in the video in the resource links below. But basically, you don't have to move your eyes all the way to the beginning of the next line of text. Our peripheral vision is capable of seeing the the right and left of what we look at. By "starting" each line about ½ inch inside of the line and "wrapping" to the next line before you actually reach the end of the previous line, you can train yourself to use your peripheral vision to catch a few extra words at once.

Now, practice one of the three techniques above. Test your speed at [FreeReadingTest.com](https://www.freereadingtest.com):

- Your score after trying one of the suggested speed reading tricks: _____
- Your comprehension score: _____

OTHER RESOURCES:

- Tim Ferriss, "[Triple Your Speed in 20 Minutes](#)" (free video).
- **Spreeder**: This free online tool is great because it allows you to copy and paste any text into the tool for practice, and you can incrementally adjust factors that increase your speed.