

## Current Methods of Speed Reading Programs

Speed reading programs vary greatly in terms of what techniques they teach, what they promise, and the actual outcome. This can be confusing if you have decided to explore speed reading for the first time, and had always thought (like many of us) that speed reading is just one single concept or technique that can be learnt. Actually, there are at least two major approaches to speed reading that differ in fundamental ways. Most speed reading programs are based on one of these two major approaches to speed reading, though there are also a lot of individual variations between the many programs.

Traditional speed reading programs are based on something that we all do naturally - instead of reading a passage in detail, there are times when we just scan it, letting our eyes travel down the page quickly. With simple scanning, most people can read up to 600 or 700 wpm (words per minute), as opposed to 200 - 400 wpm when we are reading carefully, for comprehension and study. The first speed reading programs just improve on scanning speed.

Many studies corroborate the fact that there is no need to read every single word in a passage of text in order to gain comprehension or an understanding of it - the mind naturally fills in the gaps of what we don't actually read. And to put it simply, the more we 'skip' while reading, the faster we can read. Though this varies among individuals, it is generally true that a certain amount of material can be skipped without losing very much comprehension. Of course, some experts disagree, saying that speed readers typically comprehend only 50% of what they are reading, as opposed to as much as 75% for regular reading.

Some other speed reading programs teach you how to speed up the rate of your 'scanning' by leading your eyes across the page using the sweeping motion of a 'pacer' (which your eyes naturally follow) or by teaching you to use and increase your peripheral vision while reading. Despite what some experts say about the low comprehension, there is considerable documentation of the efficacy of these speed reading programs and some people have proven that they can comprehend just as much information as someone who read the exact same piece of text at normal reading speed.

Some of the newer speed reading programs work on a different principle. They argue that scanning the page in a linear manner, whether or not you read every word, is completely unnecessary; in fact, they claim that it even wastes time. Rather, they posit that the human mind is capable of mentally 'photographing' a complete page of words - taking in everything that is on it in its entirety, in a very short period of time. Some speed reading programs claim incredible success rates based on this principle, though it remains controversial. Mainstream scientists are skeptical about these claims, arguing that the programs just teach people to scan really quickly, and that the overall comprehension is poor.

## About the Author

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