



New Century College English
-- Efficient Reading --

新世纪大学英语 快速阅读

华中科技大学外语系 编著

华中科技大学出版社

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Efficient Reading

新世纪大学英语快速阅读

(第一册)

华中科技大学外语系 编著

本册主要编写人员

主 编 陈玉红

副主编 钟 华 余千华 徐志华

编 者 胡惠娟 李志君 吴 晔 黄 勤 胡 捷 李 菁

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策划编辑:梅欣君
责任编辑:定晓峰
责任校对:张兴田

封面设计:潘 群
责任监印:张正林

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内 容 提 要

本套教材（1~3 册）是根据新颁布的《大学英语教学大纲》（修订本）所规定的教学目标及对快速阅读所作的具体要求而编著的一套快速阅读教材。教材全面系统地介绍了英语快速阅读的各种技巧和方法，包括略读、导读、猜词、预测等。

本套教材旨在使学生以较快的速度在有限的时间内有目的、有方法、有效果地读完一定量的阅读材料，从中获得所需要的信息，以此来提高阅读效率和快速思维的能力。

前 言

《新世纪大学英语快速阅读》(1~3 册)是华中科技大学外语系大学英语教材编写组根据教育部最新颁布的《大学英语教学大纲》(修订本)而编写的一套快速阅读教材。根据大纲对快速阅读所作的具体要求,学生“在阅读篇幅较长、难度略低、生词不超过总词数 3% 的材料时,能掌握中心大意、抓住主要事实和有关细节,阅读速度达到每分钟 100 词”。本套教材共分三册,涵盖近乎所有快速阅读的基本技巧,分别供大学英语一至四级使用。

本书为第一册,分为五大部分。第一部分着重阐述了快速阅读的基本目的、大纲对学生快速阅读的具体要求及影响学生快速阅读的诸多原因。第二部分为读者较系统地介绍了基本的快速阅读技巧,并提供了提高阅读速度及理解能力的方法。第三部分为读者详细地列出了快速阅读文章的具体问题类型,以使读者更清楚地了解各种阅读问题的针对性。第四部分为读者提供了选材广泛新颖、颇具时代特色、融知识性与趣味性为一体的阅读文章 60 余篇,其难易程度均不超过大纲规定的四级词汇范围。每篇文章前注明了应该达到的阅读速度,以供读者自测,文章后还配有文章字数及检查学生对该文章理解程度的练习题。第五部分是练习题的参考答案。本书的附录部分给学生提供了常用的词根、前缀和后缀(包括了大纲规定应掌握的所有常用前缀和后缀在内),为方便记忆,还列出了它们的英语意义和例词。

本套教材有以下特点:

1. 能结合大学生的实际情况及大纲的要求,重点培养学生快速阅读及正确理解的技能,提高实际运用语言和快速思维的能力。
2. 在讲解阅读技巧之前,我们提供了“Questions for Self Understanding”,以给学生了解自己阅读习惯的机会。
3. 阅读文章具有较强的时代特色及很强的知识性、趣味性、可读性和针对性。教材中所选的绝大部分文章都源于国内外最新出版的各种报刊杂志,并针对常用的快速阅读技巧进行了专项训练。
4. 既适用于课堂教学,也适用于课外自学。
5. 即适用于本科生、研究生,又适用于专科生和自学者。

在本教材的编写过程中,我们得到了外语系系领导、广大教师及出版社领导和编辑的支持和帮助,编者在此表示最诚挚的谢意。

同时,我们还要特别感谢雷小川老师,他从本教材的选题、编写到最后的审、定稿都给予了指导和支持,并提出了不少宝贵的指导性建议,在此我们向他表示最诚挚的谢意。

由于编者水平有限,书中错误和不足难免,在此我们恳请广大读者及同仁批评指正。

编 者

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I. Introduction

A. Reading Purposes

Why do we read? Generally there are two main purposes for reading: reading for pleasure and reading for information in order to find out something or to do something with the information we get. As a college student, you are required to read a lot of materials in English with good comprehension of what you have read and also with a moderate reading speed.

Reading with good comprehension depends on your actual command of English. Your vocabulary, grammar, and good knowledge of reading skills, however, will not only make reading easier, but also enable you to read with better comprehension.

B. Causes of Reading Problems

Because of the influence of traditional method of teaching and learning, college students in China have developed many misconceptions about reading. The following are the principal ones:

1. Concentrating on Each Word in Print Aids Comprehension and Memory

Readers tend to concentrate on each word in print. They create comprehension problems for themselves. In addition, they may find that they often read a passage but cannot recall much of it, which frustrates many readers. Because of word for word reading, the brains of inefficient readers often lose their focus on reading and get distracted or bored. The eyes continue to look at the print but the brain wanders: thinking, planning, and daydreaming about unrelated topics. If they are unable to concentrate while reading or become easily bored or restless, they are probably reading too slowly to engage their mind. Their comprehension will improve if they learn to read for meaning and concentrate on ideas rather than words. Long, difficult sentences are more easily understood if they "chunk" the information into meaningful phrases. This practice, extended to all readers' reading, enables them to read more rapidly.

2. The Only Way to Read Anything Is Slowly and Carefully

Many students read everything at the same habitual rate, that is, very slowly, whether it's the TV guide, the evening newspaper, a textbook, or a

novel. Skillful readers, however, learn that there is more than just one way to read. They are flexible, that is, they read different kinds of materials in different ways. They vary their rate, depending on two main factors: the difficulty of the material and their purpose in reading. Good readers tend to concentrate only on key words, those words that give important meaning to the passage.

3. Going Back over Just-Read Material Improves Understanding

Many readers have the habit of constantly and needlessly going back and rereading parts of the sentence. Not only will they be reading slowly but they may also have trouble understanding what they are reading. The smooth, logical flow of thought is broken if they continuously go back over sentences while reading. These readers reread because they lack the confidence to believe they can understand what they read the first time around. This type of rereading discussed here is an unnecessary, unconscious habit, although at times rereading is necessary to understand difficult material or to remember additional details.

4. Comprehension Decreases as Rate Increases

Often readers say with great pride that they read slowly because they want to be sure to get the full meaning and remember every single word. Actually, by trying to digest every word, these readers slow down their comprehension and often find themselves confused and disinterested. Readers who absorb 80 percent of what they read have very good comprehension. Striving for 100 percent remembrance all the time makes readers read much more slowly than is necessary. If they try to remember everything, they can wind up remembering very little and become frustrated because of the tremendous task they have imposed on themselves. The faster, more efficient reader usually has far better comprehension than the very slow reader.

5. It Is Physically Impossible to Read Rapidly Because Your Eyes Cannot Move That Quickly

Studies show that the average college freshman reads around 200 to 250 words per minute if the materials are written in their mother tongue. These studies also indicate that it is physically possible for the eyes to see and transmit printed information to the brain at rates up to 900 to 1,000 words per minute. Beyond this rate students engage in such skills of reading: scanning (searching for a fact or item), skimming (looking for the main idea), and skipping (getting an overview). Readers who use the three S's are not engaged in thorough reading, but they are often using reading skills in a highly

effective way. Reading takes place when the eyes and mind work together: While the eyes do from 5 to 10 percent of the work, the brain does the remaining 90 percent. The brain scans, sorts, selects, samples, and finally assimilates information. So the main limitations in rapid reading are the readers' own slow eye movements and a lack of belief that they can read faster.

6. Faster Reading Takes the Pleasure Out of Reading

It is wrong to assume that fast readers move so rapidly through print that they never stop to reflect and "drink in" a favorite passage or a difficult one. Efficient readers have learned how to speed up or slow down at will, while slow readers are prisoners to slowness. They rarely have the experience of reading a novel or a short story at a stretch. In effect, when reading more rapidly becomes automatic, readers derive more pleasure, nevertheless, this skill needs practicing.

C. Syllabus Requirements

According to the revised College English Syllabus, "fast reading at the level of Band 4 requires students to be able to understand texts of average difficulty on general topics. They should have acquired basic reading strategies, including mastering the main idea and facts and details supporting the main idea, perceiving the author's viewpoint and attitude, having the ability to predict, analyze, imply, infer and conclude, and the ability to have discourse analysis. The reading speed should be 70 wpm. For texts at a less difficult level, with new vocabulary not exceeding 3% of the total number of words, the students should accurately comprehend the main idea and grasp main facts and relevant details. The reading speed should be 100 wpm". In order to obtain the information he needs, the student has to use various reading skills to predict and infer, so as to find the points and information conveyed by the writer and to make evaluations on these points and information.

D. Fast Reading

Different reading strategies can be used for different reading purposes, among which fast reading is an indispensable reading skill in obtaining information from written materials, whose objective is to enlarge reading scope, build up vocabulary, improve reading speed, enrich language knowledge, enhance readers' sense of the target language and cultivate their ability to

form the good habit of independent reading and extensive reading. In order to attain this goal, readers should know some reading techniques relevant to fast reading and have a lot of reading practice at the same time. Slow reading by means of traditional methods such as isolated vocabulary study and grammatical analysis of language pieces at sentence level or mere translation from the target language to mother tongue is surely a wrong way to deal with reading materials of various kinds, although in some cases it may help, while fast reading at discourse level can contribute to more efficient reading comprehension and faster reading speed.

Fast reading refers to a scientific way of reading different written materials in shorter period of time by adopting a variety of reading strategies after receiving a certain period of discipline. The concept of fast reading should contain the following traits:

1. faster speed of reading written materials
2. non-vocalization in reading written materials
3. reading scientifically

Fast reading is a kind of active communication. The speed should be faster than that of average reading. Fast reading speed, as mentioned earlier in the fifth misconception, is 200 to 250 words per minute on average for freshmen if the materials are written in their native language. The reading speed may reach up to 900 to 1 000 words per minutes if readers have grasped some efficient fast reading skills. How fast readers should read depends on their reading purposes.

E. Objectives of Fast Reading for College Students

In terms of College English fast reading, students should develop their ability to read written materials under the guidance of scientific fast reading skills so that they can develop a better sense of the target language they are learning and acquire the competence to read as efficiently as they can. Specifically, students should learn to use the following reading skills to achieve efficiency in fast reading: word guessing from context clues, word guessing from word formation, getting the main idea, getting the specific details, drawing inferences and conclusions, SQ3R technique, predicting, skimming, scanning and so on.

The following parts are the details of the respective reading skills mentioned above. They are presented here for two purposes. First, teachers who use the book can guide the students to get familiar with each specific skill in practicing fast reading and assist them to become efficient readers

·eventually. Second, it is hoped that students who want to learn independently can rely on the fast reading skills for reference, especially when they are practicing fast reading without the access to a professional teacher easily.

II. Reading Skills

A. Word Guessing Skills

Efficient reading requires the use of various problem-solving skills. Among them word guessing skill is one of the most important. No matter how large your vocabulary is, it is impossible for you to know the meaning of every word you read. If you look them up in a dictionary, you not only slow down your reading speed but also interrupt your thinking. Therefore, you should have the ability to deduce the possible meanings of unfamiliar words by using context clues or word analysis.

1. Guessing Words from Context Clues

Context refers to the sentence and paragraph in which a word occurs. In using the context to decide the meaning of a word you have to use your knowledge of grammar and your understanding of the author's ideas with your own knowledge because they can indicate the relationships among parts of the sentence and the paragraph. Thus, the other words in the sentence(s) that come before and after can often help you to guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words by providing a definition, an example, a restatement, a synonym (word that has the same meaning) or an antonym (word that has opposite meanings). Let's look at some examples.

Example 1: The principal—money he put in his savings account to earn interest—was saved even though the bank was closed by the police.

In this sentence, the definition of the word "principal" is already provided: "money put in the savings account to earn interest".

Example 2: Condiments, for example, pepper, salt, and mustard make food taste better.

You can guess the meaning of the word "condiments" from the examples provided in the sentence: "something people use to make food taste better".

Example 3: He had a wan look. He was so pale and weak that we thought he was ill.

The word “wan” is restated as “pale and weak” in the sentence.

Example 4: Father is an expert in piano, and mother is a virtuoso in violin.

You can decide the word “virtuoso” is a synonym of “expert” because of the parallel sentence structure.

Example 5: Unlike his brother, who is such a handsome man, Tom is quite plain.

You can guess the word “plain” means either “ordinary” or “ugly” because the word “unlike” signals the contrast between Tom and his brother.

Example 6: Mark got on the motorbike, I sat behind him on the pillion, and we roared off into the night.

From your general knowledge you can decide “pillion” must be “something in the back of a motorbike that can carry people”.

There are three points you should bear in mind. First, you should be content with a general idea about the unfamiliar word because it is both very hard and unnecessary for you to decide the exact meaning. Second, you should learn to recognize situations in which it is not necessary to know the meaning of the word because an understanding of the passage does not require the understanding of every word in it. Third, a word often has more than one meaning. You should be careful about the new meanings of a familiar word.

For more practice on word guessing skill from context clues, please go to Passage 45 in Book I.

2. Guessing Words from Word Formation

Another way to determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word is word analysis, that is, looking at the meanings of parts of words. Many English words have been formed by combining parts of older English, Greek and Latin words. If you know the meanings of these word parts, you can often guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word, particularly in context.

English words are often made of three parts: a prefix, a stem and a suffix. A stem is the basic part on which groups of related words are built. The part attached to the beginning of a stem is called a prefix; that attached to the end

is called a suffix. Generally the stem and prefix determine the meaning of a word; the suffix determines its part of speech, whether it is a noun, a verb, an adjective or an adverb. Let's look at some examples:

Example:

prefix	stem	suffix	word	meanings
un-	forget	-able	unforgettable	a. unable to forget
im-	press	-ive	impressive	a. leaving deep impression
sup-	port		support	v. to hold up physically or emotionally
tele-	gram		telegram	n. a written message sent far away

With time going on, some of the word meanings have changed to some extent. However, the derivations of the modern meanings are all based on the original meanings. Although word analysis is not always enough to give you the precise definition of a word, it can help you to understand the general idea of the word, especially along with context clues.

In Appendixes, you can find lists of some common stems and affixes with their meanings and several examples. If you study them carefully and try to keep them in mind you will find that word formation is a really efficient way to enlarge your vocabulary.

Reading is in fact a very interesting and challenging guessing game that tests your intelligence. Hope you could enjoy it and become a good guesser.

3. How to Use a Dictionary

If you want to read a passage really fast, it is necessary to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from context clues and word formation, rather than stopping to use a dictionary. However, there are also some cases in which you can find very few context clues to use or there are too many new words to guess that you have to go to a dictionary. Besides, it is also necessary for you to consult a dictionary after finishing reading in order to make sure you understand the exact meaning and usage of the unfamiliar words. Only in this way can you really grasp the words and make them become your active vocabulary.

It is often said that dictionary is the best language teacher, particularly when you are studying English by yourself. Therefore, a good language learner ought to be good at using a dictionary.

A good dictionary provides lots of information about a word: spelling,