
How to be a

RAPID

READER

*6 Steps to
Increased Speed
and Concentration*

KATHRYN REDWAY

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To
Peter and Michael Duncan

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Introduction _____

Why Read This Book?

YOU have picked up . . .

THIS BOOK to flip through it, to see if it is
worth reading or buying.

RAPID READING is . . .

SIMILAR to the actions you carry out to
determine if you want . . .

TO BUY or read this book now.

GLANCE at and understand the . . .

TITLE, cover illustration, the . . .

TABLE OF CONTENTS
. . . and chapter headings. Flip through the book to see illustrations and layout, and read through one or two paragraphs. The approach to reading and memorizing described in this book is similar to the process you have just completed. By looking down the left-hand column above you have skimmed the . . .

KEYWORDS to assess the value of the book to
you. You have done your . . .

FIRST RAPID READ.

The purpose of this book is to enable professionals and others, such as students, to assimilate quickly and use documents such as magazines and textbooks more effectively. Many of us have a lot of literature—papers and professional or official documents—to deal with and information to absorb and re-

call. By learning to read rapidly, you can increase (typically tenfold) your effectiveness in dealing with documents and the information they contain.

The aim of this book is to boost your confidence and build on what you already know. It gives you a flexible technique that you can adapt to *your* needs.

This book is based on the attitudes and comments of many businesspeople and students who have attended the author's courses. The questions they have raised, the difficulties as well as the enthusiasm have been recorded. This book should often mirror your own thoughts and respond to them.

How to Use This Book

Rapid reading is not just reading faster; it is also the technique of focusing on what you need. The approach of this book is to emphasize the importance of **setting objectives before** you start reading. Identify now what you need most and go to the sections of the book that supply your needs. You do not have to follow this book—or any other textbook—sequentially from page 1 to the end.

A key part of rapid reading lies in the selection of what you need from a document. Things you already know or that are of no interest or use to you must be ignored. This means that rapid reading consists of learning **where** to find information and **how to interpret it**. Many documents contain information you may not need now, but may want to refer to later.

Use this book in the same manner that you use any other document:

- Do you want to find out what it contains?
- Do you want to summarize the contents?

■ Do you want to learn a part of the contents?

If, after your first search through the book, you decide that you need more, go back, but only after you have completed your initial rapid read.

Also, remember that if you enjoy what you are doing, reading will be much more effective.

Who Should Read This Book?

The average professional person with 1.8 children reads four novels and two professional books per year, and each month reads thoroughly one professional magazine and skims (ineffectively) through two other journals connected with his or her work. All this reading occupies, perhaps, one hundred hours per year. This book enables you either to cut this reading time to ten hours per year, with more effective selection of information, retention, and recall, or to read about ten times as much in the same amount of time.

This book is also for people who read few books, because they are discouraged even before they start. To them, many books appear long and, if they are not well presented, intimidating. Many of these readers start on page 1 and laboriously plod through page after page, taking a long time, while others give up early and set a pattern of never finishing a book. For all readers there is a better and quicker way to go about the process.

Differences Between Readers: Professionals and Students

Many adult professionals and students use the same reading methods but are dissatisfied with the results. The dissatisfac-

tion stems from the fact that they are still using the method that they learned as **children**. They do not appreciate that their present purpose in reading is totally different from their reading requirements when they were young and that they should, therefore, be using different reading techniques from those they learned originally.

Students are required to learn certain subjects (for example, economics, law, biology, or accounting) practically by heart. Missing just one word in a test may give the student poor grades. Consequently, these students read with the sole purpose of learning by rote; often they do not comprehend what they are learning.

Professionals, on the other hand, read because they are interested in a report, or because material has piled up in the in-tray, or because they have to prepare quickly for a meeting. Whatever the reason, no one is going to ask, word for word, what they have read. Thus, their reading method and degree of comprehension should be more flexible.

CHAPTER ONE ---

What Is Reading?

In this chapter . . .

Rapid reading is a skill. Your success in mastering the skill depends on your attitude, your enthusiasm, and your readiness to try a technique. You must:

- Want to improve.
- Be confident that you will do so.

The myths surrounding the reading process are discussed and the reasons why you must abandon them are explained. The facts are that:

- Reading for both pleasure and work can be fast.
- Rereading is not necessary to aid comprehension.
- Reading can be fun and variable.
- Skimming can be reading.
- Technical documents can be read rapidly.
- You do not need to try to remember everything you read.

This chapter describes how the brain is used as you read and how the proper use of both the left and right hemispheres of the brain facilitates rapid reading. By means of a simple exercise, you can determine your initial reading speed and the extent of your comprehension. Then, after learning why comprehension is subjective and how bad habits—such as subvocalizing and lack of concentration—can be changed, you will be taken (in following chapters) through a short sequence of exercises designed to increase your reading speed.

Reading Is an Attitude

This book will give you a systematic approach to improving your reading. But if you are not committed to improvement and do not have a strong belief in your ability to improve, the technique will not work. You must have two things:

- The wish to improve. This can only come from you. You may wish to improve because you are a slow reader

and you want to read more, or because you *must* read, yet you find it difficult to be interested in the material.

- A confident attitude. Knowing that you want to improve *and* believing that you can, you must simply trust yourself and the advice and information given in this book.

Part of a positive mental attitude—the desire to improve—requires you to be optimistic. Accept that learning to read faster is a process of highs and lows. Each step contains an essential element that contributes to acquiring the technique. Do not look for difficulties **before** you start. Do not analyze each step **until** you have completed it.

First, admit that you must change your habits if you want to read faster. You do not yet know how: that's what this book will tell you. Remember, suspend judgment until you have given the technique a fair trial.

Embarking on something new is an opportunity to extend your knowledge. It will be easier if you can relax and have fun as you go along. This skill makes the same demands on the learner as acquiring any other new skill, say skiing. Be childlike in your attitude. Children quickly sense the exhilaration of other children who can already ski. Their sole objective is to be able to enjoy themselves in the same way. They learn quickly because that objective is always before them. They accept short-term setbacks, like falling over, and they do not question the instructions. Being childlike is being unafraid to make mistakes, it is finding out what works and what does not work. Today you are on the nursery slopes, with a limited speed. Look to the top of the mountain and be determined that you, too, will enjoy the thrill of speed.

Getting Rid of Myths

There are many myths surrounding the reading process. Here are a few:

1. A good pleasure-read and thorough work reading have to be slow.

There is no evidence to support this view. Slow readers, in fact, find pleasure reading too time-consuming to be enjoyable. This, of course, makes such readers reluctant even to start. Slow reading discourages readers because there are so few early rewards. Slow readers get a fragmented comprehension. They miss the overall driving idea and meaning of the material, in the same way a typist who necessarily reads every word may not take in what is typed. The typist's mind wanders off because reading is at the pace of typing—slow and dull. But fast reading, as explained in this book, will prove pleasant for leisure reading and effective for work reading.

2. When you fail to comprehend or lose concentration, immediately reread.

This is one of the most common faults of poor readers—going back to check what they have just read to try to gain understanding. It is very inefficient. It slows them down. It allows their minds to wander off. It sidetracks them from anticipating what is coming. It distracts them from thinking actively.

A simple technique for increasing comprehension and concentration is to maintain a dialogue with the author. Question the author: why did he or she say that? Is it different from what was said before? Anticipate what the author will say in the next section of the document.

3. Reading is boring.

This myth is popular with those who believe in myths 1 and 2. Reading is fun and rewarding if you are motivated, follow a rhythm, and actively seek information. Reading fast, understanding it, and retaining what is read is even more exciting.