

# 英语快速阅读文选

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**FASTER ENGLISH READING  
SELECTION**

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SELECTION**

## 内 容 简 介

本书精选供快速阅读的短文共208篇。序言部分陈述快速阅读的意义,讲解提高阅读速度的具体方法和应注意的事项。

全书文章均选自美国原版材料,内容广泛,涉及自然和社会科学的许多学科,具有知识性、科学性和趣味性。

编者对文中较难理解的语法现象、容易误用的同义词及不好掌握的惯用法均用英汉两种文字作了详细的解释,并给出了例句,使读者可以举一反三、触类旁通,大范围地扩大词汇量,大幅度地提高阅读速度。

本书可供高等院校的高年级学生、研究生、出国进修留学人员和科技人员使用。

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英语快速阅读文选

Faster English Reading Selection

## 前 言

本书是英语快速阅读教材,收入短文208篇,其中一些篇目多次在EPT(英语水平测试)教学中使用,效果良好,得到学员的好评。编此书的目的是帮助读者提高阅读速度,增强阅读理解能力,扩充英语词汇量,广泛了解社会科学知识、自然科学知识和世界各地的风土人情。

本书适合在校学习的高年级大学生和研究生,特别是准备参加国家英语水平测试和美国托福考试各类人员阅读。

本书选材广泛,内容丰富。每篇文章中的关键词、词组和应该特别注意的语言现象,以及地理名称、世界名人等,用英文和中文两种文字做了注释。

用两种文字注释,可以帮助读者准确地理解全文的含义,有助于读者提高灵活运用英语同义词的能力,同时也能促进读者逐渐养成查阅英语原文词典的习惯和用英文思考的习惯。

全书分为十二个单元,一个单元一个梯度。不同的读者可根据自己的特殊需要,选择不同的单元读起。建议读者阅读此书时以最快的速度进行,然后回答各个问题,以便掌握快速阅读能力提高的情况,并随之调整阅读速度。

由于我们的水平有限,书中难免会出现一些缺点、错误,敬请读者批评指正。

编 者

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## UNIT ONE

### Introductory passage 1

#### Faster effective reading

The comprehension passages on this course are designed to help you increase your reading speed. A higher reading rate, with no loss of comprehension, will help you in other subjects as well as English, and the general principles apply to any language. Naturally, you will not read every book at the same speed. You would expect to read a newspaper, for example, much more rapidly than a physics or economics textbook-but you can raise your *average* reading speed over the whole range of materials you wish to cover so that the percentage gain will be the same whatever kind of reading you are concerned with.

The reading passages which follow are all of an average level of difficulty for your stage of instruction. They are all approximately 200 words long. They are about topics of general interest which do not require a great deal of specialized knowledge. Thus they fall between the kind of reading you might find in your textbooks and the much less demanding kind you will find in a newspaper or light novel. If you read *this* kind of English, with understanding, at, say, 400 words per minute, you might skim through a newspaper at perhaps 650-700, while with a difficult textbook you might drop to 200 or 250.

Perhaps you would like to know what reading speeds are common among native English-speaking university students and how those speeds can be improved. Tests in Minnesota, U.S.A., for example, have shown that students without special training can read English of average difficulty, for example Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in translation, at speeds of between 240 and 250 w.p.m. with about 70% comprehension. Minnesota claims that after 12 half-hour lessons, one a week, the reading speed can be increased, with no loss of comprehension, to around 500 w.p.m. It is further claimed that with intensive training over seventeen weeks, speeds of over 1000 w.p.m. can be reached, but this would be quite exceptional.

If you get to the point where you can read books of average difficulty at between 400 and 500 w.p.m. with 70% or more comprehension, you will be doing quite well, though of course any further improvement of speed-with-comprehension will be a good thing.

In this and the following three passages we shall be looking at some of the obstacles to faster reading and what we can do to overcome them.

*Think of the passage as a whole*

When you practise reading with passages shorter than book length, like the

passages in this course, do not try to take in each word separately, one after the other. It is much more difficult to grasp the broad theme of the passage this way, and you will also get stuck on individual words which may not be absolutely essential to a general understanding of the passage. It is a good idea to skim through the passage very quickly first (say 500 words in a minute or so) to get the general idea of each paragraph. Titles, paragraph headings and emphasized words (underlined or in italics) can be a great help in getting this skeleton outline of the passage. It is surprising how many people do not read titles, introductions or paragraph headings. Can you, *without* looking back, remember the title of this passage and the heading of this paragraph?

### Ideas

Select the answer which is most accurate according to the information given in the passage.

- 1 A higher reading rate will help in other subjects as well as English
  - a) provided there is no loss of understanding.
  - b) only if we memorize well.
  - c) but not in any other language.
  - d) though not as a general principle.
  
- 2 You would expect to read a difficult economics textbook
  - a) as fast as you read a newspaper.
  - b) more slowly than you read a newspaper.
  - c) more quickly than you read these passages.
  - d) only very rarely.
  
- 3 You can expect to read the passages on this course
  - a) more quickly than you read your textbooks.
  - b) more quickly than you read a newspaper.
  - c) more slowly than you read your textbooks.
  - d) faster than any other kind of material.
  
- 4 The average untrained native speaker at the University of Minnesota
  - a) reads at 600 w.p.m.
  - b) reads at about 300 w.p.m.
  - c) cannot read difficult works in translation.
  - d) reads at about 245 w.p.m.
  
- 5 The University of Minnesota claims that in 12 half-hour lessons
  - a) it can triple a student's reading speed.
  - b) it can double a student's reading speed.
  - c) it can increase a student's reading speed four times.
  - d) no real increase in reading speed can be achieved.
  
- 6 Intensive training over seventeen weeks can
  - a) triple an untrained student's reading speed.

- b) increase an untrained student's reading speed four times.
- c) double an untrained student's reading speed
- d) triple the student's comprehension scores.

7 You will be doing quite well if you can read books of average difficulty

- a) at about 450 w.p.m. with 70% comprehension.
- b) at about 600 w.p.m. with 60% comprehension.
- c) at about 300 w.p.m. with 70% comprehension.
- d) at about 250 w.p.m. with 50% comprehension.

8 Reading words one at a time is bad because

- a) it hurts your eyes.
- b) all words are equally important.
- c) it is more difficult to get the general idea of a passage.
- d) some words are longer than others.

9 It is a good idea to skim through a passage quickly first

- a) at about 350 w.p.m.
- b) to get the general idea of each paragraph.
- c) so that you can take in each word separately.
- d) to make sure you get to the end at least once.

10 Titles and paragraph headings

- a) are more important than anything else.
- b) are surprising to many people
- c) can easily be remembered without looking back.
- d) can help us get the outline of a passage.



### Obstacles to faster effective reading

Perhaps you have seen very young children — or very old people — learning to read. They move the index finger along the line of print, pointing to each word, sometimes even to individual letters, saying the word or letters to themselves in a low voice. This is called 'vocalizing'. Sometimes the learner makes no sound though his lips may move to form the words, sometimes there is not even any perceptible movement of the mouth at all, but the learner is still activating his throat muscles slightly to 'say' the words to himself. He is still vocalizing.

However slight the extent of vocalizing may be it will still be impossible for such a reader to reach a speed of more than about 280 w.p.m. The appreciation of written words must be entirely visual and we must read *more than one word at a time*.

Look at 'you', the second word of this passage. Even if you look straight at the 'o' of that word, without moving your eyes at all you can clearly see 'perhaps' and 'have' on either side. So you can read three words at once. Now look at the word 'word' on line 3. With a very slight movement of the eyes, you can take in the whole phrase '...saying the word or letters...' in the same glance. In the same way, you can probably take in a complete short sentence on one line, like the one on line 8, at one glance. None of the lines of print on a page this size should need more than three eye movements. Take line 5. This would perhaps break up into three word groups: (1)...times there is not even...(2)...any perceptible movement...(3)...of the mouth at all, but...When you are reading well, your eyes will be one or two word groups ahead of the one your mind is taking in.

#### *Practise on something easy and interesting*

Many students trying to increase their effective reading speed become discouraged when they find that if they try to race through a passage faster, they fail to take in what they have read. At the end, they have been so busy 'reading faster' that they cannot remember what the passage was about. The problem here is that the material they are practising on is either too difficult for them in vocabulary or content, or not sufficiently interesting. We hope that the passages in this course material will be both interesting and fairly easy, but you should also practise as much as you can in your own time. Read things you like reading. Go to the subject catalogue in the library. Biography, sport, domestic science, the cinema...

there is bound to be some area that interests you and in which you can find books

of about your level of ability or just below.

If you want a quick check on how easy a book is, read through three or four pages at random. If there are, on average, more than five or six words on each page that are completely new to you, then the book (though you may persevere with it for interest's sake) is not suitable for reading-speed improvement. Incidentally, you should try to read three or four times as much 'light' speed reading material (whether it is *Newsweek*, *The Saint* or *A Tale of Two Cities*) as you do close, slow textbook work. You cannot achieve a permanent improvement in your reading speed if most of the time you are practising reading slowly.

### Ideas

Say whether the following statements are true or false according to the information given in the passage.

- 1 Very old people and very young children learn to read in much the same way.
- 2 Vocalizing will prevent readers from reading at speeds of over 100 w.p.m.
- 3 It is sometimes possible to see three words at once without moving the eyes.
- 4 To read well your eyes should be one or two word groups ahead of mind.
- 5 Some students get discouraged when they first start reading faster.
- 6 It is more important to read fast than to understand what is read.
- 7 Reading practice material should be interesting and not too hard.
- 8 It is impossible to check quickly how difficult a book is.
- 9 You should never read a book that has five or six new words per page.
- 10 *Newsweek*, *The Saint* and *A Tale of Two Cities* are unsuitable for students.

## Introductory passage 3

### Hints for reading practice (part I)

#### *Set aside time each day*

Most of us can find 15 minutes or half an hour each day for some specific regular activity. It may be a free period or a regular wait, say in the queue for a bus or meal-even while eating breakfast. One famous surgeon always made it a rule to spend at least 15 minutes on general reading before he went to sleep each night. Whether he went to bed at 10 p.m. or 2.30 a.m. made no difference. Even if you cannot keep to this kind of discipline, it is a good idea to make sure you always have a general interest book in your pocket. Don't forget it should be a book which entertains you and the English must not be too difficult for you.

#### *Check your progress through pacing*

Nearly all 'speed reading' courses have a 'pacing' element-some timing device which lets the student know how many words a minute he is reading. You can do this simply by looking at your watch every 5 or 10 minutes and noting down the page number you have reached. Check the average number of words per page for the particular book you are reading. How do you know when 5 minutes have passed on your watch if you are busy reading the book? Well, this is difficult at first. A friend can help by timing you over a set period, or you can read within hearing distance of a public clock which strikes the quarter hours. Pace yourself every three or four days, always with the same kind of easy, general interest book. You should soon notice your habitual w.p.m. rate creeping up.

#### *Check comprehension*

Obviously there is little point in increasing your w.p.m. rate if you do not understand what you are reading. When you are consciously trying to increase your reading speed, stop after every chapter (if you are reading a novel) or every section or group of ten or twelve pages (if it is a textbook) and ask yourself a few questions about what you have been reading. If you find you have lost the thread of the story, or you cannot remember clearly the details of what was said, re-read the section or chapter.

#### *Lightning speed' exercise*

Try this from time to time. Take four or five pages of the general interest book you happen to be reading at the time. *Read them as fast as you possibly can.* Do

not bother about whether you understand or not. Now go back and read them at what you feel to be your 'normal' w.p.m. rate, the rate at which you can comfortably understand. After a 'lightning speed' read through (probably around 600 w.p.m.) you will usually find that your 'normal' speed has increased—perhaps by as much as 50-100 w.p.m. this is the technique athletes use when they habitually run further in training than they will have to on the day of the big race.

### Ideas

Select the answer which is most accurate according to the information given in the passage.

- 1 The passage recommends setting aside for reading practice
  - a) two hours a day.
  - b) one hour a day.
  - c) 15 minutes or half an hour a day.
  - d) three times a day before meals.
  
- 2 One famous surgeon always made it a rule to read
  - a) for 15 minutes at 10 p.m. each night.
  - b) at least 15 minutes at bedtime.
  - c) at least 15 minutes at either 10 p.m. or 2.30 a.m.
  - d) whenever he had a spare moment.
  
- 3 It is a good idea always to carry in your pocket
  - a) a book you will never forget.
  - b) a serious book.
  - c) several books of various kinds.
  - d) an easy and entertaining English book.
  
- 4 A 'pacing' device
  - a) times a student's reading speed.
  - b) is not included in most speed reading courses.
  - c) is an aid to vocabulary learning.
  - d) should be used whenever we read alone.
  
- 5 Looking at your watch every 5 or 10 minutes
  - a) avoids the need for reading faster.
  - b) is not the same as pacing.
  - c) is not easy at first.
  - d) helps you to remember the page number you were at last time.
  
- 6 The passage recommends pacing yourself
  - a) every two days with different kinds of book.
  - b) every three or four days with the same kind of book.
  - c) every week with the same kind of book.
  - d) as often as you read a book.
  
- 7 When you are reading a novel the passage advises you to pause to check the

content

- a) every chapter.
  - b) every hour.
  - c) every three or four pages.
  - d) after every page.
- 8 The purpose of pausing for thought every so often is to
- a) rest the eyes.
  - b) make sure you have not missed any pages.
  - c) make sure you really understand what you have read.
  - d) prevent brain fatigue.
- 9 If you have lost the thread of a story you are reading, the passage recommends
- a) choosing an easier book.
  - b) glancing back over the chapter you have just read.
  - c) asking a friend to help you with the difficult words.
  - d) learning the previous chapter by heart.
- 10 The purpose of the lightning speed exercise is to
- a) increase your normal speed by practising at a very high rate.
  - b) get through the book in half the time so that you can go on to the next.
  - c) help you understand more of the content of the book.
  - d) enable you to win reading races against your friends.

## Introductory passage 4

### Hints for reading practice (part 2)

#### *Dictionaries slow you down!*

If you have chosen the right, fairly easy, sort of book for your general reading practice, you will not need to use a dictionary for such an exercise. If you really must know the dictionary meaning of all the words you meet (a doubtful necessity) jot them down on a piece of paper to look up later. Actually, the meanings of many words will be clear from the sentences around them-what we call the 'context'. Here is an example. Do you know the word 'sou'wester'? It has two meanings in English as the following sentences indicate:

- a) In spite of the fact that the fishermen were wearing sou'westers, the storm was so heavy they were wet through.
- b) An east or north-east wind brings cold, dry weather to England, but a sou'wester usually brings rain.

You should have guessed very easily that in sentence a) the word sou'wester refers to some kind of waterproof clothing, presumably quite thick and heavy since it is worn by fishermen in storms. In sentence b) it is clearly a kind of wind, coming from a *south*-westerly direction. Incidentally, you would have had the greatest difficulty in *finding* this word in most dictionaries since it often appears a long way down among the secondary meanings of *south*. If you did not know that sou' meant 'south' in the first place you could only have found the word by the merest chance.

#### *Pay attention to paragraph structure*

Most paragraphs have a 'topic sentence' which expresses the central idea. The remaining sentences expand or support that idea. It has been estimated that between 60 and 90% of all expository\* paragraphs in English have the topic sentence first. Always pay special attention to the first sentence of a paragraph; it is most likely to give you the main idea.

Sometimes, though, the first sentence in the paragraph does not have the *feel* of a 'main idea' sentence. It does not seem to give us enough new information to justify a paragraph. The next most likely place to look for the topic sentence is the last sentence of the paragraph.

'Some students prefer a strict teacher who tells them exactly what to do. Others prefer to be left to work on their own. Still others like a democratic discussion type of class. No one teaching method can be devised to satisfy all

\**expository*: giving information.

students at the same time.'

Remember that the opening and closing paragraphs of a passage or chapter are particularly important. The opening paragraph suggests the general direction and content of the piece, while the closing paragraph often summarizes the very essence of what has been said.

### Ideas

Select the answer which is most accurate according to the information given in the passage.

- The use of a dictionary is
  - advisable for speed reading practice.
  - unnecessary for speed reading practice.
  - essential for speed reading practice.
  - of no help in improving general reading ability.
- You can avoid the need for reference books by
  - learning many vocabulary items in advance.
  - choosing a fairly easy book.
  - asking a friend.
  - simply ignoring unknown words.
- If you really want to know what all the words mean
  - make a note and check later.
  - use a bigger dictionary.
  - ask your instructor.
  - read more slowly.
- To understand a general reading book, a knowledge of the meaning of every single word in that book is
  - doubtfully necessary.
  - absolutely unnecessary.
  - absolutely necessary.
  - most advisable.
- Even if you don't know a word you can often get the meaning by
  - wild guessing.
  - working it out mathematically.
  - working it out from the context.
  - comparing it with similar words.
- Words like *sou'wester* are often difficult even to *find* in a dictionary. They may be
  - spelled wrongly.
  - listed under another word.
  - only put in by chance.
  - taken from another language.

- 7 The topic sentence of an expository paragraph in English
- usually comes in the middle.
  - is most likely to be found at the end.
  - is most often at the beginning.
  - is usually omitted in expository writing.
- 8 Most expository paragraphs in English have a clearly defined topic sentence.  
In such paragraphs the topic sentence comes first
- in about 40% of cases.
  - in about 80% of cases.
  - in about 20% of cases.
  - very rarely.
- 9 Sometimes we know the first sentence is not the topic sentence because
- it does not seem to give us enough new information.
  - it is not long enough.
  - it does not come at the beginning.
  - it does not make complete sense.
- 10 The closing paragraph of a piece of writing
- is not really very important.
  - is often unnecessary repetition.
  - often comes at the end.
  - often summarizes the essence of the passage.



## UNIT TWO—1

Few can predict a winner in the popular *Tour de France*, the annual twenty-four-day bike race over twenty-five hundred miles of French countryside. Anything can happen, and usually does, in this grueling cycle race, which has been called the world's roughest road race. Accidents and exhaustion may force more than half the contestants to drop out before reaching the finish line.

A cyclist can stay in the pack, finish respectably, and still suffer rough physical punishment, but the real dangers of the race become apparent when he decides to win. Cycling down a windswept mountain road, a racer may hit sixty miles an hour—with no hope of stopping; if he loses control then, he's out of the race in a split second, slamming over a cliff or into a rocky ditch. But the reward for the skillful and lucky winner is substantial—it's possible for him to earn as much as a hundred thousand dollars a year.

Hundreds of spectators follow the *Tour de France* in cars, and cheering crowds line the streets of every small town and village along the route. The *Tour de France* is a midsummer madness for which the United States has no counterpart, either in danger or in national appeal.

1. It is a fact that the *Tour de France* is

- A the world's roughest road race
- B an annual cycle race
- C an auto endurance race
- D the world's most popular race

2. It is difficult to predict a winner because

- A anything can happen during the race

- B the course is very difficult
- C most of the contestants are unknowns
- D both A and B

3. More than half the racers may drop out because of

- A mechanical trouble
- B accidents and exhaustion
- C disqualifying violations
- D not wanting to try to win

4. Every racer can expect to receive

- A a substantial reward
- B physical punishment
- C a serious injury
- D both A and B

5. The real dangers of the race become apparent as soon as

- A a racer decides to win
- B the racers become tired
- C one accident occurs
- D the pack nears the finish line

6. The selection suggests that to win, it is most essential that a cyclist

- A be lucky and skillful
- B stay in the pack as long as possible
- C have previous experience on the course
- D have greater endurance than all the other contestants

7. The selection says that the United States has no counterpart to the *Tour de France* in

- A testing endurance
- B danger or national appeal
- C the difficulty of the course
- D spectator appeal

### Notes:

predict: v. say, tell in advance. 预言, 预报, 预示

annual: a. coming or happening every year. 一年一次的

grueling: a. severe, exhausting. 严厉的; 使人极度疲劳的

rough: a. not level, not smooth or not polished. 崎岖不平的; 难行的

force: v. compel. 迫使