Reading To Remember

Improve Your Study Skills:

A series of Seven Modules by
Virginia Nilsson, Ph.D.

Services for Students

Learning and Study Skills Assistance Program
Student Services
The more I study,
The more I know.
The more I know,
The more I forget.
The more I forget,
The less I know.
So why study?"

Anonymous
Improve Your Study Skills:

A Series of Seven Modules for Adult Students

1 Getting Started
2 Time Management
3 Reading to Remember
4 Note Taking
5 Writing
6 Surviving the Slumps
7 Exams

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- Evaluate Your Readiness for Post-secondary Education
- Start a Course
- Set Objectives
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### Time Management
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- How Time Management Can Help You
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### Reading to Remember
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- Where to Find More Information and Help
Preface

The first edition of *Improve Your Study Skills: A Series of Seven Modules for Adult Students* was written specifically for Athabasca University students. While there are some aspects of studying and some problems which may be unique to home-study students and to adults just returning to formal study, the series deals with skills and strategies from which all adult students can benefit by becoming better students. This third edition is aimed at "the adult independent learner."

The modular format of the series enables you to concentrate on any one of seven areas, or to work through the material in the order most beneficial to your particular needs. Checklists and surveys providing diagnostic and prescriptive information, and exercises encouraging you to practise the skills and strategies presented make the series interactive. As an adult student you are much more alone, working on your own, unsupported by other students and teachers, than are traditionally aged college and university students. While we are not suggesting that this handbook can take the place of fellow students and helpful and supportive teachers, the interactive nature of the material does facilitate learning and will help you to improve your study behaviours. And the annotated bibliography at the end of each module tells you where you can find information complementary and supplementary to that in the handbook.

Each module concludes with a summary and review section. When answering the questions keep in mind the purpose of the series: to help and encourage you to become a better student by improving your study behaviours and honing your study skills. You can use this section as a self-test of whether you have understood the material.
Introduction

Why an Adult Study Skills Series?

You probably think you don’t need to learn how to study. You’ve studied before. You’ve been to school. What’s this series going to tell you that you don’t already know?

Of course, you have some useful study skills. But as an adult university student, you’ll probably find that you could use some different or additional skills and techniques now. You will need to apply goal- and priority-setting skills to use your time well. You’ll be required to read advanced texts, search original documents, and review scholarly material and intellectual presentations. You’ll be expected to remember in detail what you read and to organize your learning to demonstrate your memory, understanding, problem-solving ability, and creativity for the purpose of evaluation or testing. This kind of learning will demand skills you may not have developed or didn’t use in any previous schooling.

You’ll probably discover that some of your learning styles and strategies will have to change simply because studying will have a different impact on you as an adult than it did when you were younger. For example, research has shown that tasks or methods involving significant time pressure are more difficult for adults than for young people. Although some degree of anxiety is desirable or even necessary in a learning situation, it has been shown that the optimal level of anxiety for adults is lower than for younger people. And for older adults, tasks causing considerable mental or physical fatigue may be a problem. On the other hand, you can take encouragement from the fact that most verbal skills are not influenced by age until quite late in life.
How to Use This Series

This series comprises seven modules, each of which will assist you in developing or refining a different skill. The first module can help you get started in your course and also assist you in determining which other modules in this series might be helpful to you. To make the best use of your time, it is suggested that you try the following general strategy:

1. Read the “Getting Started” module.

2. Complete the Study Skills Self-Assessment in “Getting Started” to determine if you need help and in what areas.

3. Review each of the module summaries that follows the self-assessment and number them in order of need, based on the results of the self-assessment.

4. Go to the modules in the order you have listed them to study the methods that fit your requirements.

5. Do the exercises as you go.

6. Try new ideas one at a time.

7. Test the new methods you’ve learned by applying them.

8. And remember, always pat yourself on the back for a job well done.

An annotated bibliography in each module provides alternative approaches to the same problems or emphasis and elaboration of the same methods. You can find these or similar titles at your local public or school library or bookstore. They are also available on loan from the Athabasca University library.
Will It Work for You?

You may have taken courses before, you may have just begun some courses, or you might be only thinking about university. Whatever the case, some of the tips and techniques presented in this series should help you learn more effectively. For example, we’ll show you how to pace yourself, provide information on how to learn more from your notes, and give you some helpful tips on improving your performance on exams.

Of course, nobody expects you to follow these guidelines to the letter. You will still want to do some things a certain way because that way works for you. This series provides popular and proven methods that can help you make the most of your study efforts. It’s up to you to pick and choose what’s best for you.

There are many factors which contribute to learning, only one of which is study skills. Just doing all of your course-related activities the way the series suggests does not ensure that you will learn or be a successful student. Likewise, you can be a successful student, and you can learn, even if the self-assessments point out that your study habits and behaviour are different from those of most successful students.
Virginia Nilsson, retired Professor of Psychology and Learning Assistance Psychologist at Athabasca University, was for many years a Chartered Psychologist in the Province of Alberta and a member of the Psychologists' Association of Alberta. Dr. Nilsson's extensive experience in adult education, in course development and course delivery, made her aware of the demands that Athabasca University courses place on students and the problems students face in meeting these demands. Hearing the same questions and problems from students over a period of years prompted her to write these study skills modules as a strategy to help students overcome common study skills problems.

Dr. Nilsson earned advanced degrees in Psychology at Columbia University in New York City and at the University of Alberta, specializing in learning theory. She presently resides on a farm near Colinton, Alberta.
Module 3
Reading to Remember

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</table>
Reading to Remember

You might think reading is one area that you don’t need to work on. After all, you read all types of things everyday—road signs, television ads, cereal boxes, newspapers, magazines, books. So why can’t you apply the skills you already use to the reading you will need to do for your course? As one student says:

“When I first heard about the reading workshop I thought, ‘Oh, I don’t need that. Of course I can read’.”

While it is true that you can apply some of the skills you already have in this area, you will find reading to learn at the university level different than other types of reading. To study means to understand what you read and to be able to recall it later so that you can pull ideas together. You will have to understand and remember not just what you are reading but also how the material relates to your overall course objectives. You will need to understand and analyse concepts presented in textbooks to comprehend main and subordinate ideas, to summarize the text ideas in your own words, to synthesize information, and to apply the information in new settings.

Test Your Reading Effectiveness

You may already have many of the skills required to read to learn. The Reading Habit Survey we provide here can help you determine your reading strengths and weaknesses. It itemizes the elements of reading habits necessary to read quickly, to understand what you read, to remember, and to do so efficiently. The survey also asks what type of reader you are. If you’re a passive reader, you do nothing with the information being read. You’re the kind of reader who waits for the author to make connections between ideas, and you don’t become actively involved in the process.

But an active reader is curious about the author’s ideas and uses chapter titles and section headings to determine how topics and ideas are organized. If you’re this type of reader, you make connections between the ideas you are reading and other concepts or ideas read previously. The active reader is generally the more successful reader. Clues and suggestions about how to develop your skills as an active reader are found throughout this module.
Reading Habit Survey

For each of the following statements, check under the appropriate heading according to how it applies to you. Be truthful and realistic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When I first scan a page of print, I take notice of the paragraphs.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I read like I drive, with varying rates of speed, depending upon the conditions.</td>
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<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. While reading, I find it easy to keep my mind on the material before me.</td>
<td>______</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. After I have been reading for awhile, I stop for a few moments and rest my eyes by looking at some distant object.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I am alert to the role which punctuation plays in aiding me to get the meaning.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. When I pick up a piece of reading material for the first time, I look for certain specific items which will aid me in reading the piece more efficiently.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I read groups of words at one glance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I notice an author’s distinctive writing style or flavour.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I enjoy reading.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I can read for long periods without suffering eye fatigue or tiredness.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. After I read a paragraph I can sum up the main idea clearly and briefly in my own words.</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I make a practice of skimming articles before beginning to read them.</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. In reading a paragraph I usually seek out how the thoughts are organized. I look for the main idea and the details which support it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I try not to regress or look back over what I've just read.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I do not lose my place, or skip words or lines, while reading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. I am mildly conscious of grammatical structure while reading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. I feel comfortable and perfectly at ease while reading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. In reading larger units of writing (articles, chapters, etc.) I try to see the outline and total structure of the author's thought.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. I don't usually have difficulty remembering what I read.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. When I read, I read for a definite purpose, and I try to keep that purpose clearly in mind.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. When I read, especially for any length of time, I make sure that the page before me is adequately illuminated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. I read the preface before reading a book.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. When I read more difficult material, I pause to summarize paragraphs or sections I have just covered.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. While reading, I am aware of questions I have about the material being read.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. While reading, I hold the page 15 to 20 inches from my eyes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. I am aware that, with practice, I can improve my reading skills, and I always try to work toward that objective.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Now tally up your checks in the columns headed ‘ALWAYS’ and ‘RARELY’ and according to the letters on the response lines put these totals in the boxes marked ‘ALWAYS’ and ‘RARELY’ under the same letter. How many ‘ALWAYS’ A’s do you have, and how many ‘RARELY’ A’s?

‘ALWAYS’ responses indicate good reading habits these are your strengths and they reflect effective reading strategies.

‘RARELY’ responses point to what are typically considered to be good reading habits which you do not practice and which you might benefit from knowing about and possibly trying.

Use these five groupings to direct your attention to your strengths and weaknesses. Could you improve your attention (E), your participation in what you read (D), your overviewing and previewing techniques (C)?

### Always

| A | Physical comfort, care for your eyes, and good lighting are important. Just as attention to posture and care of your body increases physical comfort, so these details increase comfort with reading and hence reading ability and efficiency. |
| D | Reading techniques: Awareness of how the page is structured, and how the eye gathers in the material—the perceptual aspects of reading—are factors which can contribute to reading improvement. |
| B | An overview of the material can give you a knowledge of how to prepare yourself for what you have to read—how much material there is, whether there are headings, illustrations, or a summary to break up or outline the content. |
| C | Being an active reader involves continual awareness of your purpose, the author’s purpose, and how the material relates to the rest of the course. Always know the context of what you are reading. |
| E | Your attention to your task, being free of distracting thoughts and activities, can give a major boost to your reading effectiveness. |

### Rarely

| D | |

Any category with a higher number in ‘RARELY’ than ‘ALWAYS’ is an area where you could develop more effective reading strategies and habits. You might decide, on the basis of this survey, that you need to improve your participation in what you read (category D) and become a more active reader, or that you want to spend more time overviewing the material you are going to read instead of ‘diving right in’ at page one and reading straight through (category C).
The substance of each of these five categories is expanded in the following pages, and more information is available from the resources which are listed and described in the Bibliography.

Remember that most of the items on this survey could legitimately be members of more than one of these categories. There is lots of overlap. As well, what works for one person won't necessarily work for you. You, as an individual, can

1. determine your strengths and weaknesses with the help of this survey,
2. find out about strategies and habits,
3. try them out, and
4. adopt those which work for you and with which you are comfortable.

Keep your Reading Habits Survey in a prominent place so you can refer to it frequently to remind yourself of these good reading habits. Highlight those habits you would like to acquire or improve.

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How to Read More Effectively

There are many techniques for promoting more effective reading, including

1. Overviewing,
2. SQ3R, and
3. Learning Pyramids.

As with any new technique, you may find it difficult to put into practice at first. Your older, more passive leisure reading habits may interfere with new active reading methods. But chances are, you'll discover you already utilize some of these techniques or various parts of them and only need to do some brushing up or organizing of your reading habits to improve your reading effectiveness.
Overviewing

Survey the material in your textbook before starting to read. Such an overview introduces you to the book and prepares you for what is to come. An overview introduces you to the author’s style and the range and organization of topics covered, and it gives you an idea of how difficult the material will be to read.

To overview, you:

1. Read the title and subtitles.

2. Read the preface, foreword, and introduction. The author’s principal ideas will be presented briefly, often by telling you what the book is about, or what the author trying to get across. Reading these sections can help you to understand the rest of the book.

3. Look over the table of contents, glossary, index, appendices, summaries, illustrations, and headings.

Those three things must be done actively. Remember the distinction made between active and passive readers at the beginning of this section?

Go back to the bottom of page 2, (the “Test Your Reading Effectiveness” section) and read again about what constitutes an active reader. Overview this module, or the whole series if you have it.

Think about what the title, *Improve your Study Skills*, means. You may be okay as a student, but you can improve.

What does the subtitle, *A Series of Seven Modules for Adult Students*, tell you?

Consider who the author is and when the book was written. Is it a recent publication, or is it old and possibly outdated? Do the author’s credentials inspire confidence in you?

Look at the organization of the modules—which will you be reading first, second, last? How does each module relate to the title?

What is the author’s style? Do the modules look inviting? Are there illustrations? Does the format and organization invite you to keep turning pages?

Try to incorporate these active overview habits into your reading habits. You have just tried them out on these modules; now turn to your course materials and overview your course and your textbook.
SQ3R

"I had heard of SQ3R, but it never occurred to me that it could help me get through my course."

The initials of this popular method of reading textbooks stand for the steps of the process: survey, question, read, recite, and review.

Survey

Surveying is like overviewing. Start by dividing the material into sections. Use the course units, chapters, chapter parts, readings, or articles as your guide. Now look more closely at the structure of the sections to familiarize yourself with what you are about to study and to prepare yourself for the job of reading. Thoughtfully done, this process will enable you to predict what the author is going to say. To survey:

1. Review the chapter introduction, structure, and summary.
2. Look at the illustrations, graphs, tables, and end-of-chapter questions.
3. If there are no headings or illustrations, skim over the material itself, looking at the first and last sentences of paragraphs to get a general idea of the content.
4. Note where the author summarizes.

Question

The second step is to formulate questions based on your survey. Turn the boldfaced headings into questions. For example, convert a heading such as “General Systems Theory” into “What is a General Systems Theory?”, or “What does the author think of General Systems Theory?” You can also turn summary statements into questions or utilize study questions posed by the author. And don’t forget the table of contents. Use it as an outline and make each heading into a question. Using page 1 of this module as an example you could ask:

How can I read more effectively?

What is the Q in SQ3R?

If you know the answers to these questions, you have read at least some of the material effectively.

Read

Now read the material that you have surveyed and questioned. You will read actively because you will be reading to answer the questions you posed. You might want to indicate in the margins at this stage such things as the location of answers to your questions, or places where something isn’t perfectly clear. But don’t make extensive notes or underline at this time. You don’t want to interrupt the continuity of your reading. You want to read the entire section, chapter, or article. Then go back and reread to take notes or to underline, and to recite, which is the next step of the SQ3R process.
Recite

To be an effective reader, you have to be able to remember and understand what you read. Without looking at the page, state in your own words what you have just read.

It’s easier to understand and restate the information when you are reading and have the material in front of you. Prompts in the text help you recognize concepts, research findings, or names.

“Harlow, ...oh yeah, I remember his research. The baby monkeys liked the terry cloth mothers—like in this picture.”

It is much more difficult to recite, to repeat the information, without the material in front of you. Without those prompts you have to recall and organize the material yourself. But the recalling and organizing helps ensure that you understand the material and remember it.

To recite, look away from the material and ask yourself questions about what you have just read. Make a deliberate effort to recall the important points. If you can do this, you are demonstrating some comprehension of that material and taking a step toward storing it in memory. If you cannot do it, or have trouble doing it, you should actively reread the material.

Review

As you complete sections of work, review them briefly by skimming over the material. Periodic reviews are essential if you are to retain what you have read or comprehended. The more often you review, the better you will understand and remember the material. So skim over the heading of each section as you complete it, and recite what you have learned. And only reread enough to refresh your memory and ensure that you have not left anything out.

At the beginning of each study session, take a minute or two to review all of the material up to what you will be working on. This sets up a context for the material you are about to tackle. At the end of each study session look back over what you have done.
The Learning Pyramid System

Another successful reading system, which uses many of the same techniques as the SQ3R method and requires you to be a very active reader, is the Learning Pyramid System. Not only is this a good system for understanding what you read, it also results in a good set of notes. Some materials lend themselves more easily than others to this system, so you may discover that you "think pyramids" when reading in some courses and not others.

To construct a learning pyramid out of some assigned reading you have to visualize your material as different levels of interrelated detail. You may have one main concept at the top of your pyramid, or two. If you have more than two then you are at the second level of the pyramid. Go back and try to come up with one or two main ideas or general concepts. You can often do this at the overview or survey stage of your reading.

As you read the material, look for the supporting details to fill in the spaces in your pyramid under the corresponding broader concepts or topics. If your pyramid has gaps in it go back into your material for the information.

At first you may have to revise or redo your pyramid as you study and organize the material and fill in the gaps. But later, as you get more skillful at structuring your reading information in this way, you will probably be able to visualize pyramids in your head.

Below is an empty pyramid and following it, a pyramid of this study skills series. Before looking at the completed pyramid, try to fill in the empty one with the contents of the modules which you have read thus far. Then compare your pyramid with the completed one. They won't be the same, of course, but you should begin to get an idea of how to structure material in this way.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SQ3R</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priorities</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Grading</td>
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<td>Schedule</td>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>Review</td>
<td>Move</td>
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<td>Basics</td>
<td>Study</td>
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A Reading Exercise

In the process of working through this module you have overviewed, surveyed, questioned, read, recited, reviewed, and constructed a learning pyramid. Test how well you have learned this material.

1. By means of recall, without referring back to the table of contents, recite aloud or jot down the major sections of this module in the space below.

2. If you have difficulty, refer back to the headings and subheadings and use them to jog your memory about the order and content of the sections.

3. Try to fill in the details by recalling the main ideas presented and thinking about support of those ideas.

4. If you cannot remember or do not fully understand some sections or main ideas, go back and look at them again.

5. Now turn to your course materials and try to apply some of the techniques presented here. Keep this module handy to remind you of why and how you should read effectively.

Remember, it isn’t necessary to utilize any one technique in its entirety. You may find parts of different techniques which are useful, you may combine techniques, or you may use different techniques for different material.
How to Read Faster

When reading to learn, it's most important for you to understand what you are reading. But you don't want to take too long to read because you have a great deal of material to cover in what seems like very little time.

When you read, your eyes should be sweeping across each line of print and then quickly returning as they drop to the next line. As your eyes sweep they should make several stops, focusing each time on a number of words, an area of fixation, called the eyespan. Check this out by watching someone else reading. You'll see their eyes sweep, stop to fixate, and then move on. Slow readers read one word at a time, fixating on each word. If you watch their eyes you'll see a very jerky eye movement. You may see them mouth each word or even run a finger along the line they are reading, so the eye follows the finger. They are limiting their eyespan to one word and thus slowing their reading speed. And, by fixating on each word, they cannot read in meaningful phrases because a single word, such as a noun, has little meaning unless it is tied together with verbs and prepositions.

Compare:

You can practise increasing your reading speed and eyespan with any reading material.

Don't the words make more sense, or make sense more readily, when they are put together?

To work on increasing your reading speed, record the time it takes to read a paragraph or a page of writing. Then count the number of words and record the number of words you read per minute.

Call this your baseline reading speed. Then, with similar types of material, push yourself to read more quickly. Do this by trying to incorporate some of the techniques which this module presents. Quickly skim the material first, before you read it, to get an idea of what it's all about. Ask some questions which this material can answer for you. Try to lengthen your eyespan.

At the same time you want to make sure that you aren't compromising your reading comprehension. There's no point in reading fast and not understanding what you are reading. But for practice purposes, just try reading faster to increase your basic speed, and when you have accomplished that then you can go back to concentrating on comprehension.

You will find that you read different types of material at different speeds.
This table shows what have been determined to be rough averages for different types of material.

### Range of Reading Speeds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Reading</th>
<th>Words per Minute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light-easy (Novels)</td>
<td>250—350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (Newsmagazines)</td>
<td>200—225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy-difficult (Textbooks)</td>
<td>100—150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Look at these word-per-minute averages. You can see quite a difference in reading speed for different types of reading material. Of course some textbooks will read more like novels while others will be extremely difficult to read. Sometimes your interest or familiarity with a subject will make a book easier to read, too.

But don’t forget our previous section. Reading speed isn’t everything. A student must be able to read to understand and remember. If you read quickly, but have to go back and read again to understand and remember, what happens to your reading speed? It is halved because you took twice the amount of time to read the same number of words. Let’s suppose, for example, that you read a 12,000 word chapter in one hour. Your reading speed is 12,000 divided by 60 minutes, which is 200 words per minute. But if you have to reread the chapter to remind yourself of what it was about, to remember, you now have taken two hours. And, since the number of words hasn’t doubled, your speed is now 12,000 divided by 120, which is 100 words per minute.

### Test Your Reading Speed

Several reading samples are included here if you want to determine your reading speed at varying levels of difficulty. Time how long it takes you to read a sample and record the time. Divide your time in minutes into the number of words given at the end of each sample to get the number of words you read per minute. For example, if it takes you one and a half minutes to read the first excerpt, divide 1.5 into 208. You read 139 words per minute.
Reading Samples for Speed Testing

Sample One

"The purpose is to define some of the real costs incurred in the external mode and to relate them to the resources earned by the distance education students. In resource allocation processes distance education interests are often severely weakened by unreadiness to define cost factors specific to that teaching mode. We have too readily been drawn into the language and conventional wisdom of a costing structure which assumes that teaching costs will vary directly with enrolments and can be uniformly measured by staff: student ratios which tacitly assume a homogeneous mode of course presentation. Even as we protest about external studies being shortchanged we may get diverted from the central issue of fixed course preparation costs into arguing for special extra resources for the most visible student support facilities such as local study centres. The economic analyses of single-mode open universities have shown that the true costs of distance education can be examined only when the terms of reference are properly defined. In two-mode universities we have a structure which is highly appropriate for small student population, particularly where students may wish to move between on-campus and off-campus study. But within such a structure resources, like information, rarely flow—they have to be pulled."

Word Count = 208

Time = ________

WPM = ________

(Guiton, Patrick. "Resource Allocation in the Australian Two-Mode University", in Learning at a Distance. ICCE, pg. 178, paper 62, 1982)

Sample Two

"Ross maintains our interest in Mrs. Bentley largely through his skillful rendering of an active and flexible mind in conversation with itself. Throughout the novel Mrs. Bentley probes, explains, amplifies, qualifies, retracts. She is obviously interesting to herself, and her initial attraction for the reader lies in her evident belief that life, being essentially reasonable, is therefore susceptible to the kind of analysis that she subjects it to continually in her diary. As a result, then, of presenting the narrative from Mrs. Bentley’s very subjective first-person point of view, Sinclair Ross has shaped a novel with two concurrent plots: the day-to-day progression of events in the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Bentley, and the narrator’s commentary on the meaning of these events."

Word Count = 125

Time = ________

WPM = ________

("The Developing Canadian Community." AU English 302 An Introduction to Canadian Literature, pg. 39 of Unit 2, 1979)
Sample Three

"Having supposed that there was sense where there is no sense, and a laudable ambition where there is not a laudable ambition, I am well out of my mistake, and no harm is done. Young women have committed similar follies often before, and have repented them in poverty and obscurity often before. In an unselfish aspect, I am sorry that the thing is dropped, because it would have been a bad thing for me in a worldly point of view; in a selfish aspect, I am glad that the thing has dropped, because it would have been a bad thing for me in a worldly point of view—it is hardly necessary to say I could have gained nothing by it. There is no harm at all done. I have not proposed to the young lady, and, between ourselves, I am by no means certain, on reflection, that I ever should have committed myself to that extent. Mr. Lorry, you cannot control the mincing vanities and giddinesses of empty-headed girls; you must not expect to do it, or you will always be disappointed. Now, pray say no more about it. I tell you, I regret it on account of others, but I am satisfied on my own account. And I am really very much obliged to you for allowing me to sound you, and for giving me your advice; you know the young lady better than I do; you were right, it never would have done."

Word Count = 247
Time = _________
WPM = _________


Sample Four

"Gradually, but with disconcerting acuteness, I become aware of how close his knees are to my knees, his hand to my hand. I begin to wonder whether he'll take my hand in his. A faint warmth from him seems to creep through me until I feel hot all over. Strange to be sitting so close to him in the dark. Would it be nice to hold his hand or not? Horrible if my hand (or his) were perspiring. Furtively I dig out a handkerchief and dry my palm. He laughs at something on the stage and turns to me. My heart gives a jerk. Now, perhaps—but he's already absorbed in the play again. My heart is still working too hard. It's very warm, though my feet are cold. My hands are damp again. The edge of Bill's shoulder in its well-cut dark suit is just touching mine. I feel cramped, but to shift away is impossible. It would be tactless. Even rude. Only maybe he's not comfortable either, and just keeping still out of politeness? There is a faint, spicy scent from his hair. It tickles my nose. A hush settles over the theatre, and in the depth of it a colossal sneeze bursts out of me. Bill's shoulder moves away. He is trying not to frown. I wipe my palms again. Then I furtively inspect my watch. Good God, is it possible we've only been here half an hour?"

Word Count = 242
Time = _________
WPM = _________

"It rained every day out of one big purple cloud which drifted away at night, so that the mornings came in hot and clear, but by noon it was over the ranch again, and would start to rumble, then shiver and crack with lightning; then the downpour of rain, while the horizons all around were calm and blue, with fleecy white clouds motionless upon the hills. Nell called it the Goose Bar sprinkling system. It brought out the strong, fresh colors of the flowers; dark salmon geraniums in the ultramarine blue window boxes, and red, pink, purple and white petunias in the flower border. The roofs of the buildings were red and clean, with no dust on them, and the grass as green as a billiard table."

Word Count = 128

Graph Your Reading Speed

Plot your words per minute (WPM) for the five samples on the graph below.

![Graph for Sample Reading Speed](image-url)
Can you tell the level of difficulty of each sample from your various reading speeds? The samples are presented in what is, for most people, decreasing order of difficulty. If this is so for you, then your graph will look something like:

As the number of words per minute increases, from left to right, the difficulty level decreases. If your graph differs from this one, it is not surprising. Level of difficulty is not the same for everyone because it depends on so many factors—familiarity with and interest in the material, for example. If you do this same test several times, you will probably see an increase in your reading speeds as you become more familiar with the material.

You can use your own material to test your reading speed too. Just gather together several different types of reading material, set a timer for three minutes, and begin reading one of the reading pieces. When the timer rings, stop reading, count the number of words you have read, and divide that number by three. Once you have done the same for all the readings, plot your speeds on the following graph.
You can even plot your words per minute on a graph over a period of weeks to see if your reading speed is increasing. Select one book to use as your test material so that the level of difficulty remains fairly constant and time yourself using the three-minute method once a week. Plot your weekly words per minute reading-speed score on the graph.
Summary and Review

In this module you were presented with strategies for improving your reading and comprehension. To help you summarize what you have learned answer the following evaluation questions on the exercises that you have completed.

1. Did the Reading Habit Survey (pp. 3-4) indicate that you are a passive reader or an active reader?

2. What is your answer to question 1 in the Reading Exercise (p. 12)?

3. If you determined your reading speed using the Reading Samples for Speed Testing (pp. 15-17), what was your average reading speed?

4. What do your reading speed plots look like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>per sample</th>
<th>per week</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>w</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

pg. 16

pg. 18
Annotated Bibliography for Reading to Remember

The bibliography in this module comprises material related to student success through good reading skills. Some of the materials repeat or expand on what this module has presented and some suggest alternative approaches.

The bibliography lists information on general study skills; how you can succeed, difficulties you may encounter in your studies and possible remedies for the difficulties. If you are encountering setbacks, or want to avoid encountering them, have a look at one or more of these books. They can help you define problems before you go on to the other modules. This list is only a sampling of the library holdings. If what you are interested in on this list is not available the librarian can help you find something similar.

There are many other good titles on the market so do not feel that you are limited to these books. If you have access to a library or can go on-line on your computer you can find out what materials are available on reading skills. Most bookstores have reference or “self-help” sections which you might find useful to browse through.


This programmed text (don’t write in it unless it is your personal copy) offers a very detailed, in-depth opportunity to improve reading comprehension.

Ellis, David B. Becoming a Master Student. Rapid City, South Dakota: College Survival, Inc., 1996.

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their education. The book explains and gives practice in reading strategies which have proven useful for successful students. The book is aimed at any new post-secondary student. The level is appropriate for any age.


This book covers a wide range of topics aimed at success. Open-ended exercises, diagrams and cartoons help to make the content interesting and interactive. Included is a chapter on learning from textbooks.


This book provides plenty of practice in comprehension. The answers to the exercises are included.


This is a serious academic approach to study skills with plenty of examples and diagrams and a detailed table of contents, index and references. There are good chapters on learning from texts, reading efficiency, and vocabulary development.

A wide variety of topics including reading are covered, and there are lots of examples and exercises which enable you to practise and see how the skills and strategies help.


The chapters are layed out as courses, with the material presented separately from the exercises for developing skills, and with opening objectives and closing summaries. The presentation is serious, with no illustrations, cartoons, or references. Included are good sections on reading and reading notes.


This book has a good section on reading and gives good examples and exercises.


This book is part of the McGraw-Hill basic skills system kit. One of the topics covered is reading. The chapter is short, but there are many good illustrations and exercises. There are no references or suggested readings.


The sections on reading are excellent, with lengthy exercises and quizzes on the material in the chapters.


Included in the extensive contents are three chapters on reading comprehension and reading notes. Schumm is written for an adult audience and concentrates on presenting textual material along with inventories, exercises, and activities. It includes references for each chapter and has an extensive detailed table of contents and an index.


Staton is writing for the classroom student, but the book contains a good section on reading which is appropriate for home-study students.


The section on reading in this self-study handbook includes a checklist of good reading habits and skills, and good instruction and practice in reading comprehension skills.

This is an excellent book which takes a positive, dynamic, optimistic approach to study skills, including reading. It is written for the student in the classroom, but it is effective for any student. There are plenty of examples, exercises, and checklists to encourage active reading.