

Six Reading Myths

Myth 1

I HAVE TO READ EVERY WORD

- Many of the words used in writing grammatically correct sentences actually convey no meaning. If you exert as much effort in conceptualizing these meaningless words as you do important ones, you limit not only your reading speed but also your comprehension.

Myth 2

READING ONCE IS ENOUGH

- Skim once rapidly to *determine the main idea* and identify the parts that need careful reading. Reread more carefully to plug gaps in your knowledge.
- For most students in most subjects, reading once is not enough.
- Good reading is selective reading.* Select those sections relevant to your purpose in reading. Take a few seconds to quiz yourself on the material you have just read, and then review those sections that are still unclear or confusing to you.
- The most effective way of spending each study hour is less time devoted to reading and more time to testing yourself, reviewing, organizing, and relating the concepts and facts, mastering the technical terms, formulas, etc., and thinking of applications of the *concepts-spend more time learning ideas, not painfully processing words visually.*

Myth 3

IT IS IRRESPONSIBLE TO SKIP PASSAGES IN READING

- Many college students feel that it is irresponsible to skip passages in reading and to read rapidly. The typical college reading load creates a reading problem for everyone. You must actively decide what is important. The idea that you cannot skip, but have to read every page, is left over from when we first learned how to read. As a result, students feel guilty if they find a novel dull and put it down before finishing it. Forget the guilt! Read and learn what you need to.

Myth 4

DEVICES ARE NECESSARY TO IMPROVE MY READING SPEED

- What most people need to improve is reading efficiency - reading with a **purpose**, practicing skimming, looking for main ideas so that you can read them more carefully, and taking notes. The best and most effective way to increase reading speed is to consciously force yourself to read faster. Reading speed and efficiency is affected by the reading environment. Be sure your reading area is free of any distractions, has good lighting, and ventilation. Use a 3x5 card or your hand as a pacer to increase reading speed.

5 Myth

IF I SKIM or READ TOO RAPIDLY MY COMPREHENSION WILL DROP

- Research shows there is little relationship between rate and comprehension. Some students read rapidly and comprehend well; others read slowly and comprehend badly. Whether you have good comprehension depends on whether you can extract and retain the important ideas from your reading, not on how fast you read. If you can do this, you can also increase your speed. If you "clutch up" when trying to read fast or skim and worry about your comprehension, it will drop because your mind is occupied with your fears and you are not paying attention to the ideas that you are reading.
- If you concentrate on your purpose for reading - e.g. locating main ideas, and the details, and force yourself to stick to the task of finding them quickly - both your speed and comprehension should increase. Your concern should be not with how fast you can get through a chapter, but with how quickly you can locate the facts and ideas that you need.

6 Myth

THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT MY EYES THAT KEEPS ME READING FAST

- Assuming you have good vision or wear glasses or contacts to correct your eye problems, this belief is nonsense. If you have developed the habit of focusing your eyes too narrowly and looking at word parts, it will be harder for you to learn to sweep down a page of type rapidly.
- Usually it is your brain, not your eyes, that slows you down in reading. Your eyes are capable of taking in more words than your brain is used to processing. If you sound out words as you read, you will probably read very slowly and have difficulty in skimming and scanning until you break this habit.

Steps to Follow in Skimming for the Main Ideas

1. Read the title of the selection carefully. Determine what clues it gives you as to what the selection is about. Watch for key words like "causes," "results," "effects," etc., and do not overlook signal words such as those suggesting controversy ("versus", "pros and cons"), which indicate that the author is planning to present both sides of an argument.
2. Look carefully at the headings and other organizational clues. These tip you off to the main points that the author wants you to learn. You may be accustomed to overlooking boldface headings and titles which are the obvious clues to the most important ideas. If you concentrate on the details and ignore the main ideas, you will have much more difficulty retaining the information you read.

Remember that authors of college textbooks want you to recognize the important concepts. They use:

- a. Major headings and subheadings to convey major points
- b. Italicized words and phrases so that crucial new terms and definitions will stand out
- c. Lists of points set off by numbers or paragraphs that begin with phrases such as "The three most important factors..." etc.
- d. Redundancy or repetition. By stating and restating the facts and ideas, the author ensures that you will be exposed in different ways to the concepts she feels are the most crucial for you to understand. She hopes that on at least one of these exposures you will absorb the idea, and therefore, it is vital you recognize when an important concept is being restated in different words. It is also important to recognize when you have completely mastered the idea.