

Speed Reading

Question

Please tell me how to speed read.

Answer

First of all, let's consider the question, "Why do we need to speed read?" I think the answer can be summed up in the following two points.

- ① **To get the information in the shortest time possible.**
- ② **To get more correct information.**

At first glance, ②above may seem contradictory to the idea of "reading fast". Well, depending on the material in an English text, you may have to read it carefully, word by word, but in most cases, reading slowly will not get you the right information. When you read slowly, you tend to "read one word at a time," and the individual English words tend to be disjointed, like this

When you answer the telephone, you can often make some pretty good guesses about various characteristics of the speaker. Pat was able to deduce quite a about Mark's caller, even though the caller had said nothing explicitly about herself. Most listeners can identify children's voices without any problem. When the caller is an adult it is usually easy to tell whether a speaker is female or male.

Students who are just beginning their training in reading long passages tend to fall into this trap. But this way of reading does not give you the essential information about what the sentence is trying to say as a whole.

It is better to read in "word chunks", to get the right information as in the following example.

When you answer the telephone, // you can often make some pretty good guesses / about various characteristics / of the speaker. // Pat was able to deduce quite a lot / about Mark's caller, // even though the caller had said nothing explicitly/about herself. // Most listeners can identify children's voices /without any problem. // When the caller is an adult // it is usually easy / to tell // whether a speaker is female or male.

1. Practice of Phrase Reading (Phrase Reading)

This kind of reading is called "Phrase Reading". This English sentence is part of the Kyoto University's examination questions, so there are many difficult words in it.

You should be able to read it without much difficulty.

Please keep the following points in mind when you make "word chunks".

① **Make a big break before the conjunction.**

As in the first sentence of the previous English sentence, in the case of the form 'Conjunction + S + V ... , S' + V' ~', the second subject is separated from the first by a large space.

② **Separating before a preposition**

Create a "Word Chunk" of "preposition + object"

③ **Create a "word chunk" of "verb + object"**

One of the common faults of many of you is that you seem to have little awareness of (3). Whenever you see a verb, try to make a "verb + object" sentence as soon as possible. (Of course, English sentences in the first (SV) and second (SVC) sentence patterns do not have an object.)

④ **Find the idioms quickly**

In order to do this, you must know what an idiom is. You should start learning idioms as soon as possible in parallel with learning English vocabulary.

If you do this, you will be able to read something like the following

When you answer the telephone, // you can often make some pretty good guesses /

Verb + Object Partitions before S Verb + Object

about various characteristics / of the speaker.

Preposition + Object Preposition + Object

// Pat was able to deduce quite a lot / about Mark's caller,

Idiom Preposition + Object

// even though the caller had said nothing explicitly / about herself.

Idiomatic conjunctions Verb + Object Preposition + Object

// Most listeners can identify children's voices / without any problem.

Verb + Object Preposition + Object

// When the caller is an adult // it is usually easy / to tell //

infinitive

whether a speaker is female or male.

Idiom

2. Skip over unknown words

Many famous "speed reading" books published in the U.S. and Europe suggest various methods for reading English quickly, but here are some points that are common to about 10 "speed reading" books and that may be useful to you right away.

- ① **Read skipping unknown words.**
- ② **Familiarize yourself with the topic of the English text on a daily basis.**
- ③ **Develop a habit of reading on a regular basis.**
- ④ **Increase your vocabulary of English words and phrases.**

There are also other books that mention things like "increasing the number of English words you see at one time". However, these famous books were originally written by native English speakers who already knew enough English words to teach them how to read faster, so they cannot be applied to you as a foreigner (i.e., you have a lot of unknown English words).

However, even so, I would like you to practice these four things as a basic attitude for those of you who need to increase your English vocabulary. When you are preparing for a class, or when you are working on a new English sentence for an exam, please be aware of these four points and try to practice them. In particular, **"1) Read skipping unknown words" is the recommended reading style for all 10 books**, so let's discuss it in detail here.

The purpose of skipping unknown English words is to "grasp the author's main idea". There is one thing to keep in mind when skipping. **"Skipping is not the same as "just skipping. You should try to read as accurately as possible while practicing "Phrase Reading". When you are reading with this in mind, and you still find a passage that doesn't make sense, don't stop there.** It means, "Do not be distracted by unintelligible sentences. Rather, think of it as, **"There will always be a clear passage behind it, so read on"**.

To summarize what I've said so far - to improve your speed reading, you should always try to practice Phrase Reading and skip over unknown English words. At the same time, make an effort to increase your vocabulary, study English grammar and syntax, and be interested in various fields to increase your knowledge. When reading English, always try to read fast, and try to guess the meaning of unknown words before consulting the dictionary.

3. How to read only the first sentence of each paragraph

There are many books that recommend reading only the first sentence of each paragraph as a method of speed reading. It is true that this method can be very effective. In fact, I myself use this method when I read, for example, *The Japan Times* magazine, where I read an English text that has more than six paragraphs. This way, I can grasp the author's Main Idea. You should try it. However, please be aware that this method does not always work. It depends on the content of the English text, so I think it is better to be prepared to "practice without excessive expectations.