



COLLEGE OF IDAHO

Reading Rate

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"Reading well" does not mean reading everything at the same pace and with the same technique. As a college student, much of your reading will be assigned material. You get information from everything you read and yet you don't read everything for the same reason or in the same way. For example, a novel can be read quickly just to get the story, whereas a poem might be read slowly, perhaps several times to determine the meaning. Good readers are *flexible* readers. Once they *determine their purpose* for reading, they *adjust their rate* to fit the type of material they are reading.

Five Categories of Reading Rates

- **Careful** - used to master content including details, evaluate material, outline, summarize, paraphrase, analyze, solve problems, memorize, evaluate literary value or read poetry.
- **Normal** - used to answer a specific question, note details, solve problems, read material of average difficulty, understand relationship of details to main ideas, appreciate beauty or literary style, keep up with current events, or read with the intention of later retelling what you have read.
- **Rapid** - used to review familiar material, get the main idea or central thought, retrieve information for short-term use, read light material for relaxation or pleasure or comprehend the basic plot.
- **Scanning** - the method by which you read the newspaper – used to get an overview of the content or to preview.
- **Skimming** - done a little more quickly. It is what you do when you are searching for something particular in the text – the way you might read a phone book or dictionary. Used to find a specific reference, locate new material, locate the answer to a specific question, get the main idea of a selection, or review.

Knowing how to use all five reading styles is a great advantage to you because it gives you a wide variety of ways to handle your reading. It also gives you choices, and the more choices you have, the more power you have to arrange your life in satisfying ways.

Examples

Imagine this: You come home from school or work to find a stack of mail in the mailbox. As you walk into the house, you flip through it, scanning for anything important or interesting. There are two bills, a letter from a good friend, your monthly subscriptions to *Newsweek* and *Nature Conservancy*, and seven pieces of apparent junk mail.

You put aside the bills to be paid at the end of the month. You skim quickly through the junk mail to make sure nothing of value is hidden in the stack, find a reimbursement check from your insurance company, and throw away the rest. You set your *Newsweek* magazine on your desk to read later, then sit down to read the letter from your friend. You read it twice slowly, savoring every word and conjuring up images of your friend as you go. Chuckling over your friend's antics, you change into your jogging clothes. Then before you leave the house, you take a few minutes to scan your *Nature Conservancy* and then file it away with the rest of your magazines. Scanning the articles in this magazine gives a lot of information to mull over.



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While jogging, a possible essay topic for your English class comes to you as a result of having scanned your *Nature Conservancy* magazine and you brainstorm about what you will write tonight for your essay proposal.

Isn't this process a vast improvement over throwing all your mail into an unsorted pile on your desk thinking you will get to it later (and never getting around to it)?

You probably already use the first four types of reading – normal, careful, scanning, and skimming. To use the fifth, rapid reading, you need to be able to do the following:

- Move your eyes quickly down a page of text and use peripheral vision
- Turn the pages quickly
- Raise awareness of your bad habits and reduce regression
- Determine what you want from the material before you read it
- Consider the author's intention
- Look at chapter questions and chapter summaries
- Formulate your own question – remember the levels of reading comprehension

This process may seem awkward and difficult at first but if you stick with it, you will soon find your speed and comprehension increasing dramatically.