

Improving Reading Fluency

As a student you are faced with the need to read a lot of information. You will not get the most out of the time you allot for studying if you read inefficiently. Here are some ways you can improve your reading fluency.



- Do your heaviest reading assignments when you are most alert. A physical task takes more time to accomplish when you are tired. The same is true for a reading task.
- Focus on what you are reading. Your reading will be slowed if you are distracted. Distractions can be external such as a TV playing, or internal such as worrying about something you have to do the next day.
- Look over the reading material before you begin reading. You can quickly scan a page by looking for headings, bullet points, and things in bold. As you do this you may find that there is some text you can skip.
- Avoid reading word by word. Try to read blocks of words. Your eyes can take in four to five words at a time. Work on expanding the number of words you can read at a time.
- Don't pronounce each word in your head as you read it. The action of pronouncing words, even if not aloud, slows you down.
- Use a pen or pencil or even your finger as a pacer. Your eyes and brain will try to keep up with the pace you set. You can work on increasing your pace of reading.
- Avoid straining your eyes. Reading with insufficient light, at an uncomfortable angle, or in bed lying down can result in eye fatigue that will slow your reading or cause you to stop for periods of time. Blinking your eyes from time to time can help ease eyestrain.
- Try not to let your eyes stay in the same place on the page for too long. Move on whenever you find yourself stuck.
- Don't use a highlighter. If you do, you are likely to pay excessive attention to everything on the page.
- Avoid going back to read something unless absolutely necessary. Rereading interrupts your reading flow and slows you down. You can always go back later to review material.
- Focus on key words in the sentences. You can read more fluently by quickly moving past conjunctions (e.g., and), prepositions (e.g., as), and articles (e.g., a).

A visitor to New York City asked a passerby how he could get to Carnegie Hall. The New Yorker replied "practice, practice, practice." The same advice applies to improving your reading fluency.