English Learning Strategies: How to Improve Your Reading Speed & Comprehension

Dear ESL Fast Community Member,

If English is your second language and you plan to attend college in an English-speaking country, you will quickly realize how critical reading is - you'll have a massive amount of reading to complete! Many students find that they struggle to keep up, especially when competing alongside native speakers. Ultimately, your reading speed and comprehension will be key factors in your academic success.

Here are a few strategies and tools to help you level up your reading skills:

Learn New Words in Context

Having a strong vocabulary is essential to reading efficiently. If a passage contains too many unfamiliar words, understanding the overall message becomes difficult. However, we do not recommend trying to memorize words in isolation.

- **Guess from context first:** Try to deduce the meaning of an unfamiliar word from the sentence structure and surrounding text.
- **Use the dictionary selectively:** Looking up a word should be your second step. Don't try to memorize every definition listed—focus only on the definition that fits the current context.
- **Read extensively:** True word mastery happens when you encounter a word multiple times in different contexts. Broadening your reading will help lock new vocabulary into memory.

Train Your Reading Speed with the Right Tool

You may have encountered platforms that train reading speed by displaying text word-by-word. However, reading individual words actually slows you down.

On **eslfast.com** and **rong-chang.com**, our **Speed Reading** tool is embedded directly on all reading passage pages. Instead of flashing single words, it highlights **sense groups** (thought groups) and moves at a speed you control. Try an Example to experience the **Speed Reading Tool** Here:

https://www.eslfast.com/begin5/b5/b5052.htm

(As mentioned in one of our previous newsletters, training your eyes to process sense groups rather than isolated words is the secret to fast, fluent reading!)

How to Use the Speed Reading Tool

1. **Build Vocabulary First:** Before starting, use **My Study Words** (located on the same page) to review any unfamiliar vocabulary directly within the context of the passage.
2. **Activate Speed Reading:** Click the **Speed Reading** button to launch the tool.
3. **Practice Read-Aloud:** Match the tool's reading speed to the audio playback speed to practice reading aloud.
4. **Gradually Increase Speed:** Step up your speed bit by bit as your comfort grows.
5. **Check Comprehension:** Use the backward and forward playback arrows to ensure you understand what you're reading. The moving highlight bar automatically pauses longer at sentence ends to give your brain time to process full ideas.

Set a Realistic Reading Speed Goal

An average native speaker reads at around **250 words per minute (WPM)**. As an English learner, your current speed might be closer to **150 WPM**.

Do not rush! Increase your target speed incrementally:

- **Break the habit of word-by-word reading.** Train your eyes to read chunks of text together as single thought units.
- **Keep reading enjoyable.** Alongside structured speed-reading practice, dedicate time every day to read topics, stories, or articles you genuinely love.

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