

Workplace
Wisdom
For
9 To Thrive

*Proven tactics and hacks
to get ahead in today's workplace*

Nina Sunday

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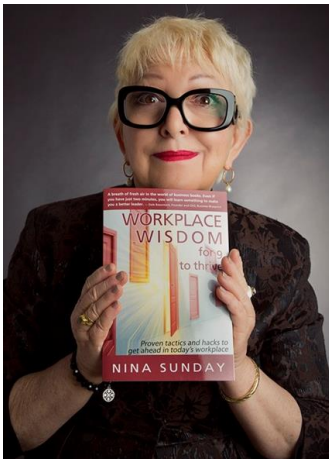
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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1. Reinvent	5
• Marginal gains helps you win the marathon of business	7
• Kaizen: how to create a workplace with energy and vitality	9
• The NUMMI project: how to change a culture	12
• The telco that saved its skin by focusing on the customer experience	17
2. Lead from the front	19
• People don't quit companies, they quit managers	21
• Beware the sigmoid curve: how to lead from the front	22
• Want change? Go to your people with questions	23
• What are the 8 good behaviours of managers?	24
3. Engage	29
• What can make you a more engaging leader?	31
• Psychological safety: nothing else matters if you get this wrong	32
• How to create a coaching culture	35
• Team culture hack: the Morning Tea Effect	37
4. Influence	41
• Primacy and Recency: give instructions so people remember	43
• What word should you avoid when giving instructions?	45
• How to change perception by framing things differently	47
• How to motivate with towards vs away-from language	48
• How to give feedback using a 5-step verbal template	50
• Feedback hack: what two words should you avoid when giving feedback?	53
• 10 Phrases To Make Your Writing More Persuasive	54

5. Increase productivity	55
• Get more of the right things done	57
• How to stop mind churn affecting your sleep	59
• Daybook — the secret tool of organised people	60
• The art of delegating	61
• There is more than one way to do it — TIMTOWTDI	63
• Adequate is the new perfect	64
• Email hack: how to write quick subject line emails	66
• How to overcome this limiting belief about productivity	66
6. Love your customers	69
• Love your customers	71
• What are the most common reasons clients leave?	71
• Customer service hack: answer the phone with a smile in your voice	74
• Do what you say you are going to do	76
• Master the paradox of exceeding customer expectations	76
• Under-promise, over-deliver timeframes	77
• How to say ‘no’ to clients without using the ‘no’ word	80
7. Communicate	83
• The top 5 complaints of email communication	85
• How to fix 5 common business writing mistakes	88
• Anatomy of a customer-friendly email	90
• The billion-dollar business cost of typos	91
• How to cut wordiness using active voice	92
• Email hack: how to gain cut-through	94
• Don’t hide behind email. Know when to pick up the phone	96
• Commas made simple with FANBOYS	98
8. Present persuasively	101
• Five common presenting mistakes	103
• Five common slideshow mistakes	106
• How to grip an audience with your first line	107

• How to ditch your notes and speak with confidence	110
• Why you should steer your presentation with more questions	113
• How to handle Q&A	115
• Do you have a call to action at the end of your presentation?	117
• Powerpoint® hacks to add sparkle to your slideshow	118
• How to be perceived as a polished speaker	120
• What's your self-talk before you speak to an audience?	123
9. Skyrocket your sales	125
• Do you ask enough discovery questions when selling?	127
• Top 8 mistakes people make when selling	130
• When is the best time to call prospects?	132
• Sales hack: what is the best opening question?	134
• How to respond to the Hollywood brush-off	135
• How to cultivate a voice people trust	137
• How to craft a convincing return on investment	141
• Social proof as a way to negotiate	144
10. Sharpen your office etiquette	147
• How to remember people's names and never be embarrassed again	149
• Great office etiquette helps teams thrive	152
• Five annoying open-plan office behaviours	156
• Etiquette hack: how to properly introduce a VIP	158
• Impress people by fine-tuning your handshake	160
• How to stand out with a simple thank-you card	162
11. Gather wisdom	165
• Read your way to the top	167
• Are we in danger of losing our deep reading brain?	169
• What habits make you a sluggish reader?	171
• Collapse time and reduce information overload	175
• Speed reading hack: double your reading rate with Macroreading®	176

• How to measure your reading rate	179
12. Stay curious	181
• Curiosity has nine lives	183
• How to brainstorm: always look for the second right answer	192
• Where are the gaps in your work/life balance?	195
• How to boost your emotional intelligence	197
References	203
Acknowledgements	213
About the author	217

INTRODUCTION

Predictions around disruption to the world of work declare there is a new work order. Young people today may have 17 jobs in five different careers. Portfolio careers are on the rise i.e. not one job, one employer, but multiple jobs and employers, perhaps over more than one profession.

In a tech world, it's high social skills that help you stand out and get ahead. The best managers are outstanding communicators who know how to lead a team, collaborate with a diverse range of people and able to influence peers and customers to take action. They know it's not what you say but how you say it that makes the difference. Word choice and how we use language impacts the way we persuade others. In the age of disruption, being adept at human interaction is rewarded with higher wages.

Being average at your job is over. Not being interdisciplinary can harm your career. To thrive in a rapidly changing world, managers and teams need to continuously improve all aspects of their workplace know-how: the art of communication and influence, productivity, sales and service, leading people and creating a conscious and transparent workplace culture.

To future-proof your employability in a VUCA world, (short for volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous), constant reinvention is the key to keeping up, evolving and staying relevant. Your job IS change. It's up to you to stay change agile and continuously grow and reboot your brain. I trust this book will help you achieve the getting of workplace wisdom.

How to use this book

For managers

Each chapter is a stand-alone piece of micro-learning. Copy a chapter to distribute to your team and invite them to read before the next team meeting. You'll find a list of trigger questions in the article *How to Brainstorm* within the *Stay Curious* section, such as:

- What can we **start** doing?

- What can we **stop** doing?
- What can we do **more of**?
- What can we do **less of**?
- What can we **improve**?

And when you've captured in writing a wish-list of next actions, then rate each suggestion as an A, B, C or D according to its priority, for example:

- A. low effort, high payoff – do first
- B. low effort, low payoff – do next
- C. high effort, high payoff – just get started with the first action-step
- D. high effort, low payoff – don't bother

For individual contributors

Show this book to your manager and volunteer to copy a chapter to send around, with your manager's blessing, to team members with the invitation to read then participate in an ideas discussion at the next team meeting.

You might like to suggest your manager leads that discussion, or if they decline, offer to do so yourself. At the meeting, use the trigger questions and record each suggestion in writing as they come up. Allocate a specific time. After idea generation, go back to quickly rate each suggestion as an A, B, C or D priority.

By you taking the initiative this way, (where there's a positive workplace culture), it will likely identify you as a high-potential team member destined for leadership. (However, if this suggestion is not well-received, ask yourself what can be done to make the culture more conducive to growth and learning; or was it perhaps the manner in which you suggested you take the initiative?)

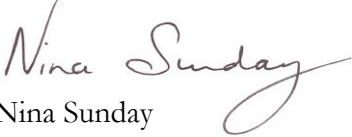
Always be reading

To grow your workplace wisdom read a non-fiction book (digital or print or listen to an audiobook) at least 10 minutes a day. Read at least one book a month, 12 books a year. See the article *Read Your Way to the Top* in the

Gather Wisdom section of this book for reasons to read every day. Leaders are readers. Be a reader.

Feel free to stay in touch by visiting the contact page at www.brainpowertraining.com.au and sharing your thoughts.

The way we did business five years ago can't be the way we do business in the next five. Constant reinvention is the key.


Nina Sunday

Gather
wisdom

READ YOUR WAY TO THE TOP

What makes some people successful and others not? One answer is that most successful people are voracious readers. Their curiosity is intact.

Warren Buffet

One of the wealthiest individuals in the world, CEO of Berkshire Hathaway and billionaire investor, Warren Buffet, spends 80% of his working day reading and thinking. Pointing to a stack of books, Buffet said, ‘Read 500 pages like this every day. That’s how knowledge works. It builds up, like compound interest. All of you can do it, but I guarantee not many of you *will* do it.’⁽¹²⁾

Steve Siebold

Over the last 30 years author Steve Siebold interviewed 1200 of the richest people. In his book, *How Rich People Think*,⁽¹³⁾ he writes, ‘Walk into a wealthy person’s home, and one of the first things you’ll see is an extensive library of books they’ve used to educate themselves on how to become more successful.’

Elon Musk

Entrepreneur, inventor and engineer, Elon Musk’s curiosity is voracious. ‘I was raised by books,’ says Musk.⁽¹⁴⁾ ‘You don’t know what you don’t know. You realize there are all these things out there,’ says Musk.⁽¹⁵⁾ According to his mother, Maye, at age nine he read the entire Encyclopedia Britannica, ‘and remembered it’.⁽¹⁶⁾

Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey is credited with saying, ‘Books were my pass to personal freedom. I learned to read at age three, and soon discovered there was a whole world to conquer that went beyond our farm in Mississippi.’ Bill Gates says he reads 50 books a year. ‘This is one of the things I love about reading,’ Gates said. ‘Each book opens up new avenues of knowledge to explore.’⁽¹⁷⁾

Dame Anita Roddick

At age ten, Dame Anita Roddick read a book about the Holocaust which awakened her sense of natural justice.⁽¹⁸⁾

The list of billionaire entrepreneurs and successful people who are avid readers is long and includes Mark Zuckerberg, Ellen DeGeneres, Anthony Robbins, Mark Cuban . . . and a whole lot more.

Gather Wisdom 10 Minutes A Day

Did you know that 50% of books sold are never read? Amazing, isn't it? That's like paying money to a health club then never showing up.

The average person reads 250 words per minute. A typical paperback has around 350 words per page. By reading ten minutes a day, you'll get through seven pages a day. This means you can read a typical length book of around 150 pages in 21 days.

Even with longer books, if you read ten minutes a day you'll be able to finish a book a month. By the end of a year, you'll have read at least 12 books; by the end of 10 years, it adds up to more than 120 books.

Consider . . . by setting aside just ten minutes a day, you can easily read 120 books that can help you grow richer in knowledge and wisdom in all areas of your life. Where else can you get that kind of return in less time than it takes to do the dishes? People might say they don't have time to read, but that's just an excuse. They're using their time to do other things they value more than reading.

Find excuses *to* read. Ten minutes reading a day gives you a slight edge that reaps big dividends in your life. Reading ten minutes a day makes itself felt at the end of the year.

Action

1. Go to your bookshelf and find one of those books you bought a while ago but haven't started reading yet . . . then read it for ten minutes.
2. When you've done that, reflect; pause for another minute and think about what you've learnt. How much richer are you for having read that?
3. Learn how to double or triple your reading rate.⁽¹⁹⁾ Improve the way your eyes access information via text.

Benefits of Voracious Reading

The French call it ‘soif’; thirst for learning. Here are just some of the benefits of being an avid reader:

- keep up to date
- make better-informed decisions
- improve critical thinking, vocabulary and writing skills
- increase general knowledge, become a better conversationalist
- improve confidence and self-esteem
- avoid lag, become an early adopter, gain a competitive advantage, stay ahead of the curve
- discover that one good idea that will increase your income and net worth.

ARE WE IN DANGER OF LOSING OUR DEEP READING BRAIN?

If I asked you, ‘Did you read a book in the last year?’, could you say yes? 26% of Americans surveyed did not say yes.⁽¹⁾ That’s the percentage who admitted they did not read a book within a 12-month period.

Is there a virtual book-burning going on? Bookshops are going out of business. Publishers are dying. Are people not reading books anymore?

As a speed reading instructor, I’ve observed how reading has changed over decades. Reading has become referencing. We click on hyperlinks, move sideways through multiple articles, moving from idea to idea rather than following deeply a single extended argument.

So my question is . . . are we in danger of losing our deep reading brain? Are we living in a post-literate society?

Literacy Shapes Thinking

Research was done with a tribe that did not read or write; they had only an oral tradition. They were given a puzzle to solve.⁽²⁾

In the far north where there is snow, all bears are white.
The place, Novaya Zemla, is in the far north.
What colour are the bears from Novaya Zemla?

A typical answer from someone from a pre-literate tribe runs along the lines of, 'I don't know. I've seen a black bear. I've never seen any other bears. Each locality has its own animals.'

While these people are no less intelligent, they do think differently.

They could not solve a problem of logic. Their thinking is more situational, based on experiences.

Ideas written down free you from a subjective approach. The more you read the more you understand that things are complex, not simple. And you can better tolerate ambivalence, that is, more than one viewpoint. You can avoid knee-jerk reactions to things. It helps to sharpen our minds. It's brain training.

Neuroplasticity

The scientific principle of neuroplasticity describes how the brain changes its structure and function in response to activity and mental experience.

Just as rats raised in a stimulated environment grow new brain cell connections, reading a book with an extended argument has the capacity to grow your ability for critical thinking and analysis.

It's important to read broadly. Just as people who don't exercise can't do certain things with their bodies, so, people who don't read can't do certain things with their minds.

What Happens If We Don't Read?

We're not opening our minds to other ways of looking at things. We devolve into seeing things as black and white; this is oversimplification. For example, George Orwell's novel, *Animal Farm*,⁽³⁾ has characters, the Sheep, who repeat the slogan, 'Four legs good, two legs bad.' They simplified things down to its ridiculous essence.

So what can we do about it? Here are five ways.

Action

1. Don't feel pressured to read for long periods. Read for just ten minutes first thing in the morning or last thing at night. Reading is an exercise in mindfulness.
2. Some schools schedule DEAR events, drop-everything-and-read, for ten minutes. But is it happening in the workplace? Why not have a Drop-Everything-And-Read Friday? Just for ten minutes.
3. Read book summaries. A book summary is a good entrée into a book. It can capture your attention and make you want to read the entire book. (Incidentally, book summary websites often have a really great list of titles to read.)
4. Learn to speed read so you read more at the speed of thought.
5. Instead of just reading articles, blogs and posts, read whole books. They go deep and have capacity to transform our thinking.

Use it or lose it. Use your Deep Reading brain or lose it!

WHAT HABITS MAKE YOU A SLUGGISH READER?

Did you know ancient readers read aloud? Ancient writing was continuous sentences called *Scriptio Continua*⁽⁴⁾ which lacked punctuation, upper or lower case, or word separation. Reading was aloud, mostly as a group activity.

One of the earliest recorded silent readers was St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, from 374 AD. St Augustine wrote his observation that Ambrose, 'When he read, his eyes scanned the page and his heart sought out the meaning, but his voice was silent and his tongue was still.'⁽⁵⁾ St Jerome, another learned monk from the fourth century, was also a silent reader.

In the West, it wasn't until the early Middle Ages, beginning in the seventh century, when the separation of words began⁽⁶⁾ that reading transformed from group readings out loud to a silent, private activity. With Gutenberg inventing the printing press around 1439, books became easier to own and literacy more widespread.

But Is Reading Truly Silent?

The modern average reader sub-vocalises as they read; they silently listen to the sound of the words while reading. And it's sub-vocalisation that limits your reading rate. You are trapped into a reading speed no greater than the rate at which you can hear and process spoken word. Almost everyone sub-vocalises, or hears an inner reading voice. It is a carry-over from when we first learned to read by sounding out words and reading aloud.

(And no, we don't need to say the words to understand the words. Your brain is capable of direct eye to mind transfer of meaning.)

If you consult *Guinness Book of World Records*⁽⁷⁾ you'll find the fastest talker was clocked at 655 words per minute (wpm) in 1995. Speed readers still sub-vocalise, but they minimise its impact. Only some of the words are heard mentally as they read. This enables them to read and comprehend above 1,000 wpm.

How Do You Minimise Sub-Vocalisation?

Simple answer . . . by reading too fast to hear all the words! With the right techniques, it is as simple as it sounds. Can you read the following sentence?

Eye sea two feat in our rheum.

If you heard this sentence spoken aloud rather than reading it, you might experience less difficulty to make out meaning. The sounds make sense but the spellings do not.

This demonstrates how the meaning of the written word does not come from sound of the words but from the spelling or the 'look' of the word. Words are recognised on sight, therefore we do not have to sub-vocalise to understand the meaning.

Do We Read With Our Eyes Or Our Brain?

When we scan a landscape, our eyes cannot move smoothly. They jerk and jump along spasmodically. No amount of mind-over-matter training will change the fact that unless the eyes are fixed on an object in motion they are tracking — a bird, a car, a moving finger — the eyes will not move continuously.

When looking around a room, your eyes move from one point of focus to another and perceive different visual information at each resting-point.

Your brain constructs a stable and coherent image of the room in your mind, despite your eyes constantly moving from point to point. While your retina is registering changing fragments of a room one at a time, your brain perceives the room as one integrated, perceptual whole.

Lack Of Eye-Movement Fluency

Have you ever watched someone's eyes as they're reading? If you observe someone reading, you'll notice a stop and start motion while they read. That problem is called lack of fluency.

It's like a learner driver whose car kangaroo hops down the road; rather than a skilled driver who drives in one smooth direction. Lack of fluency slows down your reading rate.

The technical term for this jerky motion is 'saccade' (from a French word meaning 'jerk'). So when the average reader reads they experience a jerky, saccadic eye movement.

Here's a simple demonstration. Close one eye and gently touch its eyelid by placing the base of your hand on your chin then let your fingertips lightly rest over the eyelid. With your other eye, slowly trace a line from left to right.

Can you feel jerking movements of the closed eye as it moves in synch with your other one?

Spot The Bloop

Next time you are watching a film or video and the scene calls for the actor to gaze at a moving object, observe . . . do the eyes follow smoothly or do they jerk along? If eye movement is smooth and stable, the actor had a moving object for their eyes to track. If eye movement is spasmodic, then the director committed a film-making bloop!

Regression

Another problem with eye movement is regression. Regression is where the eye flits back and rereads part of a word. It's almost imperceptible; most

people don't even know they're doing it; you can't see it with the naked eye. Eye movement cameras can measure the number of regressions the reader makes per page. They teach this in optometry school.

Did you know the average reader regresses around 50 or 60 times per page? And it slows down reading rate. Imagine driving down a suburban street, continuously stopping at each intersection, backing up a car-length before moving on. It's a time-waster.

Fixation

How many words do you *see* at one time while you read? Probably only one word at a time, the one you're reading? A problem of the average reader is they see only one word at a time, perhaps two or three, with a narrow focus. That's called fixation.

Speed readers can read whole lines at a time; that's around ten words at a time. In fact, there's a Chinese saying referencing speed reading, 'one eye, ten lines' or 一目十行.⁽⁸⁾

Learning to speed read shifts you from reading individual words to reading ideas. That's where you save time as well.

Summary

You can increase your reading speed significantly by learning techniques to overcome the poor reading habits of:

- sub-vocalisation
- lack of eye-movement fluency
- regression
- fixation

If you spend 30% of your time at work or study reading and you double your reading rate, you've just freed up an additional 15% of time for other things — or you can read more in the same amount of time.

COLLAPSE TIME AND REDUCE INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Do you read everything at about the same rate, or do you have faster rates when reading for overview and slower rates reading for detail?

Can you vary your reading rate depending on:

- difficulty of the material
- your familiarity with the subject
- your purpose for reading it?

Mature readers break the habit of reading everything at one constant rate and have cultivated the capacity to adjust their speed to the material.

Suppose you plan to take a 240-kilometre car journey. You might encounter hills, curves and a mountain pass, as well as straight and level sections.

The total journey might take three hours, averaging 80 kph. While driving, you may slow down to 40 kph on curves and hills, then on straight, level sections you could travel up to 100 kph. Similarly, avoid using a single speed when reading. It's too rigid.

Read easy, familiar material more swiftly. To gain an overview, scan through detailed explanations that are not so relevant to your purpose. That way you can pick up the gist or working knowledge of a text or locate specific information.

Read more slowly long, wordy sentences (so you can untangle the ideas). To understand unfamiliar, abstract information or detailed, technical material, also read slower.

Take shortcuts. It's ok to skip material not necessary for your purpose. Good readers are flexible readers. They know how and when to shift gears when reading and use several different speeds.

They use low gear when the going is steep, and shift into high gear in the straight sections. You can too.

Action

1. Read with a flexible reading rate: accelerate and decelerate.
2. Use the Macroreading[®] previewing technique described in the next chapter.
3. Attend a speed reading workshop or enrol in an online program⁽⁹⁾ and learn how to and double or triple your current reading rate without loss of comprehension.

SPEED READING HACK: DOUBLE YOUR READING RATE WITH MACROREADING[®]

Often the content of a non-fiction book is more important as a whole rather than all its details. If you have only an hour to spend on a book or document, it makes sense to scan all of it roughly in that hour than to read in detail only part of it from the beginning.

There is a way to scan reading material twice as fast as your comfortable reading rate that's effective and saves you time. It's called Macroreading^{®(10)}. (It's not exactly skim reading, nor is it speed reading, but if you Macroread[®] on a daily basis, it may trigger your brain to get used to fast input and subsequently read faster.) This method is described in my book on how to study, *Brainpower Smart Study: How To Study Effectively Using a Tested and Proven 8-step Method.*⁽¹¹⁾

Overview

Look first at the big picture by starting with an overview of your material. The goal is simply to gain a general idea of the content, the gist of it. Relax as you preview. You can't expect to fully understand it at this preview stage. You'll read for understanding later.

Aid To Memory

When it comes to remembering what we read, we recall more if we allow the mind to first register the information with a fast overview. Have you ever watched a movie a second time and noticed things that escaped your attention on first viewing? When the goal is to remember what you've read, previewing before reading for detail is beneficial.

Then during the read-for-understanding we recognise what previously registered during the preview. Multiple reading in this way aids memory.

Aid To Understanding

Previewing is not only an aid to memory, it's an aid to understanding. It is good practice to start wide, gain a global view first, then go deep, to focus on the detail.

Easy Way To Start

Do you ever find it difficult to open a book or report to even begin to read? A preview is less demanding and eases you effortlessly into action.

How Fast Is A Preview?

A comfortable preview rate varies from person to person. For most people, twice as fast as their comfortable read-for-understanding rate is about right.

An average reader reads around 200 — 300 words per minute. Their preview rate might be around 400 — 600 words per minute — twice as fast as their usual reading rate. If a typical paperback has around 300 words per page, then it might take around 30 seconds to preview a page.

For a speed reader who reads above 1000 words per minute (and that's with good understanding or it's not speed reading), their preview rate might be 2000 words per minute or around 11 seconds per page.

Macroreading®

In our Speed Reading program we teach a method of previewing we call Macroreading® which is scanning the text with a relaxed eye focus, at a rate around twice as fast as your comfortable reading rate, to gain an overview.

Macroreading[®] is more systematic and strategic than skim reading (which is simply picking out keywords).

Zigzag Or S

To Macroread[®], tell your eyes to slightly defocus, then move your finger, hand or a pen as a visual aid in a zigzag or ‘s’ motion down the page, scanning all the words twice as fast as a comfortable, read-for-understanding rate, to pick up the gist or general overview.

You can go through an entire book this way in less than an hour to grasp the overall structure and theme of the book. Then when you’re ready to read for detail, you will know where to go, always in the context of the whole. And when you read, target only those specific areas of the text you want or need to know; allow yourself to read in order of usefulness and appeal. It’s ok to skip sections that don’t interest you.

Much unnecessary reading can be eliminated at this preview stage, thus saving time. (By the way, this method is reserved for non-fiction. It won’t work for fiction with a linear storyline.)

What Is ‘Proper’ Reading Anyway?

In previewing, you are not reading for detail. Just allow your eyes to scan over the material, gaining a feel for the big picture, picking up the gist.

I don’t agree with, ‘If you don’t read it properly you may as well not read it at all’. What is ‘proper’ reading anyway? You might ask yourself, ‘Isn’t it a waste of time scanning words this way? How is it possible to read and understand at twice as fast as my comfortable reading rate?’

Well, here’s the secret: skilled readers don’t read everything at the same rate. They match their reading rate to their purpose.

In my experience as a speed reading instructor, I’ve observed many CEOs and Senior Managers use their own method of scanning or skimming as a way to get through their ‘must reads’. If all you need is an overview of a text, then previewing is proper reading.

Personally, I don’t read everything at one single base rate. As a skilled reader, I use a range of reading rates. I match my rate to my purpose. I can choose to speed up and scan when all I want to extract is an overview. I can slow down to a comfortable pace to read for understanding.

Become a skilled reader; read with a variable reading rate depending on your purpose.

Action

1. Macroread[®] non-fiction for the big picture first.
2. Then read-for-detail in order of interest.
3. Exceed 19 books per year on success, attitude, peak performance.
4. Keep a reading log of what you read.

HOW TO MEASURE YOUR READING RATE

Have you ever been curious to know your reading rate? Before improving reading rate through the Macroreading[®] technique described in the previous chapter, does it make sense to first measure your current reading speed, so you can compare again later? Here's an easy way to calculate your rate, using your own reading material.

What You Need

- reading material — paperback or hardback book in easy-to-read fiction or non-fiction
- countdown timer — (smartphone app ok)
- calculator
- two paperclips or sticky notes to mark start and end

Note: Reading onscreen can be up to 40% slower than reading on paper. That's why I suggest reading a physical book for this calculation.

Instructions

1. Mark beginning line with a paperclip, post-it or pencil tick. Set timer for 3 minutes.
2. Start timer and read for good understanding for 3 minutes.

3. When timer sounds, stop, mark end with a pencil tick, paperclip or sticky note.
4. Before calculating reading rate, you might like to self-test your comprehension and memory.

To check your recall, simply turn the reading material face down and verbalise a brief summary out loud to yourself for 30 seconds.

Rate your summary, whether it's:

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Average
- Below par

Calculate Reading Rate

- Words per line. Count total words (containing two or more letters) on two lines then divide by two.
- Number of lines. Count number of lines you read in 3 minutes.

$$\text{WORDS PER LINE} \times \text{NUMBER OF LINES} \div \text{MINUTES} = \text{WORDS PER MINUTE}$$

- Multiply words per line by number of lines read; then divide by 3 (minutes). This is your words per minute rate.

What's Average?

- 200-300 words per minute is a typical reading rate.
- 300-500 wpm is above average.
- 500-1000 wpm is a skilled reading rate.
- Exceeding 1000 wpm — if you self-rated your understanding and memory as excellent to very good, then congratulations, you are a speed-reader!

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The quotes, anecdotes and ideas described in this book were accumulated from a variety of sources over a number of years. While we've made every attempt to fully attribute the origin of each of these items, the author may have been unable to list some sources in the detail preferred.

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