

## Exercises to Improve Your Reading Skills

Written by Marc Shulman  
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Reading is a vital component to life nowadays. Regardless of your occupation you must be able to read efficiently. Communication through writing and reading is one of the quickest and most efficient way to transfer information. Many people do not enjoy reading for pleasure and let their reading skills stagnate once they are no longer actively improving them in school. I'm not here to persuade you to start reading in your free-time (although I think you should). I'm here to help you improve your reading skills. I assume you'll be willing to pick up a book since you were able to find this article and are obviously interested in improving your skills. Let's get going!

First of all, you must be clear on why you are trying to improve your reading skills before you embark on the challenge. There are many different reasons for improving one's skills. What's yours? What kind of reading are you trying to get better at? Do you want to be able to analyze a complex piece of literature? How to read poetry? How to read technical writing better? Each of these types of writing must be approached in a different way. Before you dig in too far, ask yourself why you want to improve your reading skills.

Next, the best way to improve your reading skills is to develop your background knowledge. Writing is just a framework for transmitting knowledge about the world. If you don't understand the words or concepts that are being transmitted through writing then reading will be very frustrating. Read newspapers, books, and start paying attention to world events. If you have a stronger handle on what is happening around you and a larger base of knowledge to pull from it will be much easier for you to read.

The next point is related to the idea of developing your background knowledge. Caring about the topic you're reading about or having motivation to learn more about it is very important to reading well. If you are trying to read something that you don't care about at all then you are going to have a hard time concentrating. This is why so many students seem to have trouble with reading assignments in school. Those students who learn to care about the content they're learning about will find reading to be a pleasure, not a chore. That doesn't mean you need to be excited beyond belief to read reports or other dry material, but you should be able to find some aspect of whatever you're reading that you're interested in. If you're reading about something you've developed an interest in and motivation to learn more about, it will feel like you're uncovering interesting information and not dragging yourself through the words.

When it comes to technical improvements to the physical act of reading, a good place to start is with your vocabulary. If you are constantly encountering words with which you aren't familiar then reading becomes much more arduous. However, that doesn't mean that you should read without a dictionary handy. Keep it nearby and look up any words you don't know. You can even keep an ongoing list of words you don't know and their definitions. Eventually, your vocabulary will improve with time.

The simplest and most effective way to become a better reader is to do just that — read. Read whenever you can and as much as you can. Cut down on the amount of TV you read or mindless internet surfing you do and read instead. The more you practice reading the better you will naturally become at it.

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