

Look Ma, No Hands! Speed Reading with
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Dedication

Happy Birthday to my dearest Gabriela, without whom this book would have been impossible for so many reasons. September 17, 2003.

Acknowledgments

If I say nothing I slight all equally, but where is the fun in that? Off the cuff I want to thank all my friends at Cafe Blue, the place that has done the most for my long term sanity for the past .7 decades. Annie, Peter, Chris, and Barry in particular have done more hand-holding than anyone should do without getting ten-ninety-nined. Ma, Pa, Uncle, Sis, all the rest, thanks too. Oh, and Alan Johnson, Brian Kennedy, Duane Hakala, Sumiko Mattingly, Michael Grinder, Vicken Totten, Jordan Jarvis, Cheri Gurse. See how a list like this grows? So many of you wonderful people who nudged me or my work over the years. Thanks.

The Starting Analysis

Do you want to spend less time on unpleasant, “required”, reading? Do you read for fun and want to enjoy your reading more? This book will help you do both. You will enjoy your fun reading more and spend less time on the other stuff.

You might expect a book on speed reading to start by measuring how fast you read. You might expect a book on speed reading to begin with calculating your words per minute or testing your comprehension. You might expect a book like this to start with a bunch of charts and graphs, but we are going to start a little differently. Charts, graphs, and multiple choice tests are valuable in the right time and place, but they can get in the way of learning the skills of speed reading. Instead of what you might expect, let’s start with a short reading *attitude* test. This test will help you decide what chapters to read, and in which order to read them. Does that seem strange? Do you normally assume you must read books from start to finish? Sometimes reading a book cover to cover is your worst option. Natural speed readers automatically take things at their own pace. For the rest of us, reading chapters “out of order” can seem like breaking the rules. There is no rule saying you have to read this entire book, or that you have to read the chapters in their printed order. We’ll spend more time on this idea later. For starters, let’s have a look at the test.

Each question has two possible answers. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. The questions are about your preferences, your feelings, what you like and what you don’t like. Identifying your preferences will help you make the most of the book. Your preferences will help you tailor the presentation of ideas to serve your needs, the same way a personal trainer would interview you before starting you on an exercise plan.

1. Reading is

- (a) Fun
 - (b) Not Fun
2. I read
- (a) Whenever I can
 - (b) Whenever I can't avoid it
3. A world without books would be
- (a) Heaven
 - (b) Hell

Some people want to learn to read faster so they can read more. Other people want to read faster so they can spend less time reading. Answering the questions should help you see in which of these two groups you fit. The two groups match two basic types of reading, fun reading and required reading. The "read more" group is usually thinking about fun reading. The "spend less time" group is usually thinking about required reading, either for work or school. Some people only read when they can't get out of it. Reading just isn't on their list of fun things to do. Other people enjoy reading so much that they will read their cereal box again and again each morning at breakfast, just to have something to read. As stated earlier, the goal is for you to enjoy your fun reading more and spend less time on the required reading.

Are you in the "read more" group? If so, you might as well work straight through this book in the printed order. It is not a long book, and there are many ideas in it for you to enjoy, as well as complete instructions for how to read faster and better. You will end up with both prime benefits of this book; you will receive more pleasure from your fun reading, and you will spend less time on required reading.

What about the "spend less time" group? One option is to read only the chapter titled The Drills. Read that chapter, practice the drills, and give this book to a friend who reads for fun. That is a good option if you just want to get the most required reading done in the least possible amount of time. But before you decide where to start, take a moment to read the descriptions of the different chapters of this book. You might see something that catches your interest. Read the interesting chapters in

whatever order you like. Just remember, if you want to read faster, you have to read and practice the drills.

In addition to this introduction, the book has five main chapters. The first chapter of this book is *The Drills*. These drills teach you to read faster. You don't need anything else. Do the drills about ten minutes a day for three weeks and you will read significantly better and faster.

Chapter two is *The Rationale*, and it explains how and why drills work. Chapter two will make more sense if you have practiced the drills. On the other hand, if you need to know all the reasons for what you are doing before you can do something new and different, skip ahead to *The Rationale*. Then when you come back you can read and practice the drills with peace of mind.

There are many obstacles to speed reading. After you learn the drills, and find out for yourself just how easy speed reading is, you might wonder why you weren't taught to read this way in school. There are political obstacles, because the methods taught here contradict predictions from teachers and school psychologists. Obstacles also come from some commercial speed reading teachers, because they deceive people into taking expensive classes without providing results. There are even practical obstacles that might prevent you from learning to speed read. If you are the fastest reader in the office, who do you think will be stuck reading those boring reports? Chapter three, *The Obstacles*, looks in detail at these and other road blocks to speed reading.

Chapter one teaches you to speed read, but that is only a beginning. *Other Stuff*, the fourth chapter of this book, defines four basic types of reading. Who wants to read poetry at one-thousand words per minute? If you are reading a novel just for fun, who cares how quickly you read it? Sometimes faster might not really be better. On the other hand, required reading is different. At work and at school you may need information as quickly as possible. Chapter four talks about the differences among the four basic types of reading: reciting, reading, skimming, and scanning. The fourth chapter also shows how to break-in a book and ways to preview books. Chapter four even teaches useful relaxation techniques. All the methods taught in chapter four can increase how much you get from of your reading.

Chapter five is *The Rewards*. If the attitude test placed you in the "spend less time reading" group, you might benefit from reading this chapter first, even before doing the drills. Most people learn better when

they have reasons to learn better. After all, how you read is not anyone else's business. Chapter five offers reasons for learning to speed read that you might not have thought of on your own. This can help motivate you to do the drills and gain the skills. Remember, the only reasons that count are the ones that motivate you!

Take a moment right now and think of what you want from this book. You can go straight to The Drills, do the exercises, acquire the skills, and then give the book to a friend. Or you can go straight to The Rewards, to boost your motivation before knuckling down to the task. If you are unsure where to start, let me suggest starting with The Obstacles, which is full of interesting information even if you never learn the drills. Will skipping ahead to Chapter three, The Obstacles, feel like cheating? If so, then it is an even better idea. You just might start a life-long habit of making books work for you, instead of struggling to work through them. Writing should serve you, whether in the form of a book, an article, or a report. You are the master; the words are the servants. Writers work hard, hoping their words will be useful to you. The reader is in control. Enjoy being in the driver's seat and decide for yourself where to start!

Chapter 1

The Drills

For those who like to cut to the chase, here it is. These drills train you to read faster. They help you comprehend more of what you read. They help you relax while you are reading. There are no machines to buy, no drugs to take, no gurus to follow. Practice the drills, obtain the skills. Practice these drills as described, using easy reading material, and your reading speed will increase. As your reading speed increases, your comprehension will also increase. You will enjoy your pleasure reading more than ever, and get through your required reading in much less time. If you must know why you are doing things before you can do them, jump ahead and read *The Rationale*. You can return to the drills after you satisfy your curiosity. Any time you feel you are being asked to do something silly or pointless, jump ahead and find the reason behind the action. Every part of each drill has an important, specific function. The drills in this chapter are the barest essentials to get you reading faster.

There are three basic steps to the drills:

- You will learn to keep time at four different speeds.
- You will learn to move your eyes smoothly to the speeds you practiced in step one.
- You will learn to move your eyes by pairs of words, then trios, then larger groups, all in time to the speeds learned in step one.

Before we start learning the drills, there are a couple of warm up exercises to try. On the next page you will see a sentence, it will be the only sentence on the page. On the page after that you will see a multiple-choice question. Your instructions are to recite the pledge of allegiance while turning the page. Read the sentence on the next page while still reciting the pledge of allegiance. Finally, turn the page again to reveal the multiple-choice question, while still reciting the pledge. If you don't remember the pledge, you can sing a song. Jingle bells works well for this. The important part is that you speak, or sing, **OUT LOUD** while you look at the sentence. Once you have turned to the question page you can stop reciting.

The ice-cream parlor always has at least thirty-one flavors to choose from.

How many choices of flavor does the ice-cream parlor have:

1. ten
2. thirty-three
3. twenty
4. at least thirty-one

The answer to the question is “at least thirty-one” You probably chose number “4”. How did you know the answer? You were able to read the sentence, even though you were talking or singing. You saw the words, which is all you needed to interpret their meaning. Let’s repeat this exercise, in case you are skeptical, or in case you stopped speaking or singing when you looked at the sentence. Remember, the point of the experiment is to discover how easily you can understand a sentence just from looking at it while singing “Jingle Bells” or reciting the pledge of allegiance.

Tom and Janet ordered pizza with olives and pepperoni for dinner.

Which of the following was NOT on Tom and Janet's pizza?

1. Olives
2. Anchovies
3. Pepperoni
4. Broccoli
5. Anchovies AND Broccoli

How did you do? Did you pick answer “5”? More importantly, did you recite or sing OUT LOUD when you looked at the sentence? If you were able to answer the question while speaking or singing out loud, then you successfully understood the sentence without hearing it. Knowing you don’t have to hear words to read words will make all the difference as you learn to speed read.

1.1 Step One–Speed

The very first step in learning to speed read is to practice counting out loud at four different speeds. YOU MUST DO THIS OUT LOUD. Later you can count “in your head,” silently; for now you must count out loud. You will learn to count at four different speeds. Later, you will use these four counting speeds to help pace your reading without a buying a machine or using your hand to point at the words.

The first speed, Very Slow, is one “count” per second. Try it out loud, like this:

“One-one-thousand, Two-one-thousand, Three-one-thousand, Four-one-thousand, Five-one-thousand, Six-one-thousand, Seven-one-thousand, Eight-one-thousand, Nine-one-thousand, Ten-one-thousand, One-one-thousand, Two-one-thousand, ...”

When you get to ten, you start again at one. You aren’t really trying to count the words on a page. The counting is just a way to pace your self. Practice counting out loud at Very Slow for thirty seconds before you continue. You aren’t doing any reading yet; you are just practicing counting at this speed.

The second speed, Slow, is a little faster than Very Slow. For most people it is about two-thirds of a second per count. The exact speed isn’t important, as long as it is distinct from your other three counting speeds. To set the pace for the second speed, try counting out loud like this:

“One and two and three and four and five and six and seven and eight and nine and ten and One and two and...”.

As with the first speed, when you get to ten, start again at one. Practice counting out loud at Slow for thirty seconds before you continue.

The third speed, Normal, should work out to about half a second per count. Count out loud like this:

“One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, one, two,...”.

With all four speeds your goal is smoothness and consistency. After a while you will have practiced enough that you can maintain a given speed easily and automatically. This will only happen after you have practiced out loud for a while. Practice counting out loud at Normal for thirty seconds before you continue.

The fourth and final speed, Fast, takes about one-third of a second per count. It is a fast count, with no pauses at all between numbers:

“OneTwoThreeFourFiveSixSevenEightNineTenOneTwo....”

Practice for at Fast thirty seconds before you continue. There is no substitute for practicing out loud. The goal of your practice is to become smooth and steady with each of the four speeds. The rest of the book will refer to these four speeds as

- Very Slow
- Slow
- Normal
- Fast

At Very Slow, counting from one to ten should take about ten seconds. You should take six or seven seconds to count from one to ten at Slow speed. Normal takes about five seconds, and Fast should take just two or three seconds. You don't have to be exact on these times as long as you can keep four separate counting speeds: Very Slow, Slow, Normal and Fast. You will never count higher than ten. Instead you will repeat from one to ten. Make sure that you have learned to count smoothly and steadily at the four speeds before moving ahead.

1.2 Step Two—Pacing One Word at a Time

Now it is time to combine counting out loud with looking at word. The next paragraph is specially formatted. It may look odd, but there is a good reason for what you see. Go ahead and read it, you will soon understand why it looks the way it does.

Once you have the four speeds you are ready for the **next** step, which is to “read” while counting. If **you** want to know how and why this works, you **will** find explanations in The Rationale. If a quick start **is** more important to you than the hows and whys, **then** just start practicing by counting words at the different **speeds**. You can re-read this paragraph for practice as many **times** as you like.

Read the preceding paragraph once at Very Slow, counting “One-one-thousand, two-one-thousand...” one count per word. You should take a little over a minute (74 seconds) to read the paragraph at Very Slow. Every time you start a new number, move your eyes to a new word, and leave them on that word for the full second. One count, one second, one word; always move forward at a smooth steady pace. This will train your eyes to move to the speed of the count. There are seventy-four words in the formatted paragraph, but you should never have counted higher than ten. You should have started with the count of “one” on each of the bolded words (Once, the, you, will, is, then, speeds, times.) Your only goals are to count out loud, and to get your eyes accustomed to moving word to word in time with the count.

Next, go back and read the formatted paragraph again, this time at Slow speed, counting, “One and Two and Three and...”. Continue to move your eyes one word per count. This time you should take a little under a minute (50 seconds) to read the paragraph. You should read one word at a time, one word to each count, always moving your eyes steadily forward. After reading the paragraph at Slow, go back and read it at Normal (35 seconds) and then again at Fast (25 seconds.) The times listed are only estimates. Your goal is to move smoothly, one word at a time at each of the four speeds. When you master counting at the four speeds, and you master the trick of moving your eyes smoothly from word to word, then you are ready to continue. Pacing your eyes is an essential part of the method; don’t neglect it.

1.3 Step Three–Word Pairs

In the previous exercises you were moving your eyes one word at a time, to match your counting speed. In the next phase of the drills you will look at word pairs instead of single words. Use the formatted paragraph below and practice at Slow. Move your eyes from pair to pair as you count, odd number on bolded pairs, even numbers on plain pairs.

It was a dark **and stormy** night. The **spooky old** house was **silent and** still, sitting **alone at** the top **of the** hill. John **tried not** to be **afraid as** he walked **up the** steps, crossed **the porch,** and timidly **knocked on** the heavy **oak door.** There was **no answer,** but the **door slowly** creaked open **from being** knocked upon. **Through the** opening John **could see** a foyer, **with a** coat rack **on his** right. What **wallpaper he** could see **was old** and peeling, **but he** could just **make out,** in the **flashing of** the lightning, **an eerie** pattern of **trees or** an ancient **forest.** **As** he stared **through the** opened door, **trying to** discern the **shapes of** the shadows **on the** wall, John **was completely** surprised by **what he** saw next.

The formatting in the paragraph above makes it easier to see the words in pairs. As you looked at each pair, you probably noticed that some pairs don't fit together so well. For example, the words "night" and "The" don't fit together as well as do "spooky" and "old". The Rationale discusses this vital part of how you process language, and how it relates to speed reading. For now, read through the formatted paragraph at each of the remaining three speeds. For each pair, instead of looking directly at the words, look at the space between them. Notice how you can still see both words without looking directly at either one. Also, without looking directly at either word, you can still understand the words completely and sense whether a pair fits together well or poorly.

1.3.1 Going Faster by Going Slower

The "dark and stormy night" paragraph is repeated below, this time with no special formatting. Your next task is to read the paragraph nine times, as directed. Don't worry if you get a little confused on the count, or if you

miss a pair or look at a trio by mistake. You might find breaks at the end of each line trick you into looking at a single word. None of these things are important. Let yourself get comfortable with the idea of looking at more than one word at a time. Let yourself grow accustomed to thinking about how words fit together to make meaning. Hold as close as you can to word pairs while reading at the different speeds as indicated below:

- Slow speed, a single word per count.
- Normal speed, a single word per count.
- Fast speed, a single word per count.
- Very Slow speed, a pair of words per count.
- Slow speed, a pair of words per count.
- Very Slow speed, a pair of words per count.
- Fast speed, a single word per count.
- Normal speed, a single word per count.
- Slow speed, a single word per count.

It was a dark and stormy night. The spooky old house was silent and still, sitting alone at the top of the hill. John tried not to be afraid as he walked up the steps, crossed the porch, and timidly knocked on the heavy oak door. There was no answer, but the door slowly creaked open from being knocked upon. Through the opening John could see a foyer, with a coat rack on his right. What wallpaper he could see was old and peeling, but he could just make out, in the flashing of the lightning, an eerie pattern of trees or an ancient forest. As he stared through the opened door, trying to discern the shapes of the shadows on the wall, John was completely surprised by what he saw next.

Congratulations! You have just completed your first official speed reading drill!! The rest of your drills will all follow this pattern. Each drill will consist of nine one minute readings. The first reading will always be at

Very Slow or Slow. You will usually work from smaller groups to larger groups then back to smaller. You will soon find reading word pairs easier than reading single words. You might find it easier to read phrases at Slow speed than to read single words at Fast speed. This means it can be easier to read 360 words per minute than to read 180 words per minute. If phrases average roughly four words each, and Slow speed is about 1.5 counts per second, then reading phrases at Slow is reading six words a second, for 360 words per minute. Compare to one word at a time at Fast speed, which is about three counts per second. That makes a straight 180 words per minute. You go faster by going slower. Slow speed is plenty slow enough for a comfortable phrase per count, but even one word per count seems like a lot of work at Fast speed. This is the difference between working hard and working smart.

At first you will practice reading single words, then pairs of words. From pairs you will move up to groups of words that make phrases, then groups of phrases that make clauses, then groups of clauses that make sentences. You will practice reading each of these different sized word groups at each of the four speeds. Before you finish you will know the largest group you can comfortably see in about half a second, and you will start reading this way whenever you feel like it.

Don't get too worried about terms such as "phrase, clause, or sentence". Word groups come in different sizes and they fit together different ways. Even in grammar class, the terms phrase, clause, sentence are not exact. The following example can give you an idea of what the terms usually mean:

People should treat each other better, if they want to make the world a better place.

The example has two parts, separated by a comma. Those two parts are called clauses. Each clause is almost a sentence of its own. In the first part of the example the words

treat each other better

is a phrase, a group of words that work together almost as if they made up a single word. As a rule, you can spot clauses by punctuation such as commas, semi-colons, colons, and parenthesis. Phrases usually aren't marked so clearly, but you know them when you see them. You know all

about different kinds of word groups, without paying attention to them. Think about the difference between;

The dog chased the cat

compared with

The cat chased the dog.

The two sentences have opposite meanings, but you don't need an English degree to know it. You don't have to think about the mechanics of the two sentences to know they have opposite meanings. You don't need to know a direct subject from a direct pass. The same is true for phrases, clauses, and sentences. You speak and think in phrases, clauses and sentences, even if you didn't know it.

Think about the way lines and curves and angles go together to make letters. Then think about how letters go together to make words. Letters make words the same way lines and curves make letters. It is the same idea. Two words make a pair, and some pairs fit together better than others. Take a sentence such as

The cat fell off the wooden ladder.

"The" and "cat" fit together differently than the way "cat" fits together with "fell". "Off" and "fell" fit together differently than the way "wooden" fits together with "ladder". You know these things about word groups without ever thinking about them. The sentence fragment, "The cat fell off," hangs together better than "fell off the wooden", which doesn't make any sense at all on its own. As a native speaker of English, you automatically know which works better, even if you failed English class. The drills teach you to rely on this kind of automatic knowing. All you need do is ask yourself, "How well do these two words fit together?" Don't worry about getting the right answer; simply trying to answer the question makes you process the full meaning of each word. Soon you will find it is easier to take in groups of words than to read them one at a time.

Letters are made of lines and curves. Words are made of letters. Phrases are made of words. Clauses are made up of phrases. Sentences are made up of clauses. Paragraphs are made up of sentences. This isn't precise, but it is a start. The drills train you to see larger and larger groups of words. Instead of trying to cram words in one at a time, you can work

at a comfortable speed with the word group size that works best for you. Don't let the phrase, "words per minute" fool you. Seeing larger groups at slower speeds means higher words per minute with less work and no feeling of "hurrying". You start the drills reading one word per count at Very Slow speed and work your way up to reading one or more lines at whatever speed is comfortable for you. On the way you will read single words, pairs, trios, phrases, clauses, and whole sentences at Fast. Most people are uncomfortable when they read at Fast. Practicing at Fast helps you learn to sense which speed and which word group size works best for you. The more you practice the larger the word group size you will comfortably take in.

Learning to find the right combination of word group size and speed doesn't happen overnight, but it does happen automatically after you do the drills for a while. The drills let you experience the way comprehension and emotional impact vary with the speed of the count. The drills also show how comprehension and emotional impact vary with the word group size. Natural speed readers, who read at 3,500 words per minute, read by the paragraph at a slow comfortable speed. This may seem incredible, but you have already taken the first step towards that goal; the rest is a matter of degree. Years ago you learned how lines and curves make letters and how letters make words. Now you can pick up where traditional schooling left off; by learning to automatically see the way words go together to make phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs. It is the same lesson, only with bigger blocks.

Your drills for day one of your twenty-one day learning program are as follows:

One minute of reading one word per count at your Very Slow speed. (60 wpm)

One minute of reading one word per count at your Slow speed. (90 wpm)

One minute of reading one word per count at your Normal speed. (120 wpm)

One minute of reading one word per count at your Fast speed. (180 wpm)

One minute of reading two words per count at your Very Slow speed. (120 wpm)

One minute of reading one word per count at your Fast speed.

(180 wpm)

One minute of reading one word per count at your Normal speed. (120 wpm)

One minute of reading one word per count at your Slow speed.

(90 wpm)

One minute of reading one word per count at your Very Slow speed. (60 wpm)

You must count out loud for at least the first few days. Counting at the same volume as normal conversation is best. If you feel awkward, then find a place where you can practice alone. Counting out loud guarantees you won't subvocalize. Counting out loud is the best way to guarantee you develop and use four distinct speeds. Counting out loud is the best way to train your eyes to move rhythmically. These things are all explained in *The Rationale*. After a few days you will feel your eyes moving smoothly and steadily to the speed of your counting. Then, and only then, you can keep the count silently, "in your head", instead of counting out loud. Count out loud until your eyes can keep pace with the count all on their own. Count out loud until moving your eyes to the count is as automatic as your breathing. When you don't count out loud, count subvocally; this will keep you from subvocalizing the words you read.

The drills are listed below. They are planned for a three week course of about ten minutes a day. The fastest you will read on your first day is 180 words per minute. Twice on the first day you will work at the snail's pace of sixty words per minute. You almost certainly read faster than that already. Starting slower than normal lets you go a lot faster in the long run. Remember, the words per minute aren't important. What counts is reading a new way, reading bigger groups per count and finding the speed that works best for you.

1.4 Schedule of Drills

Each drill has nine entries. Each entry has two parts; counting speed and word group size. The following symbols are used to represent the four speeds:

V for Very Slow

S for Slow

N for Normal
F for Fast

The units are symbolized:

1 (single words)
2 (word pairs)
3 (trios of words)
4 (sets of four words)
ph (Phrases)
cl (Clauses)
sn (Sentences)
1/4 (one-fourth of a line)
1/3 (one-third of a line)
1/2 (one-half of a line)

The speeds have already been explained, but we need to spend a little time discussing the units. Single words, sets of two, three, and four words should be clear enough. Fractions of a line should be clear as well. If you are looking at one-quarter of a line per count, then you will be reading at four counts per line. When the units are sentences you are looking at all the words between an initial capital letter and the period at the end of the sentence.

The previous units are all fairly clear; leaving just clauses and phrases. The first clause in a sentence is all the words from the beginning capital letter to the first punctuation mark such as a comma, colon, semi-colon, or parenthesis.¹ Some sentences have only one clause. The last clause of a sentence is the group of words that starts with the second to last punctuation and ends with the period. If there are more than two clauses, the rest will be groups of words marked off by different punctuation. This will make more sense as you practice the drills. Phrases are even less clear, but they are even more important. The best way to spot a phrase is to ask yourself if the words in a group fit together.

The first six days of drills are focused entirely on words grouped by counting. When you look at a group of four words, you are asking the same question you asked in the earlier exercises, "How well do these words fit together?" On day seven you will read phrases at slow speed.

¹this definition of clause is not exact, but is good enough for the purposes of learning to read better and faster.

Phrases are the most important block you will learn to read, because spotting phrases depends entirely on your ability to process each word's meaning. Counting words, counting beats per line, and looking for punctuation all train you to look at larger groups of words. There is no point to any of it, however, if you aren't processing the meaning of all those words. Reading by phrases is what really retrains your brain to process word groups. You already understand language this way; you are just now learning to read the way you naturally process.

If the table below looks confusing turn to Appendix B on right now for an explanation of each day's drill

Day One: V1, S1, N1, F1, V2, F1, N1, S1, V1

Day Two: S1, N1, F1, V2, S2, V2, F1, N1, S1

Day Three: V2, S2, N2, F2, V3, F2, N2, S2, V2

Day Four: S2, N2, F2, V3, S3, V3, F2, N2, S2

Day Five: V3, S3, N3, F3, V4, F3, N3, S3, V3

Day Six: S3, N3, F3, V4, S4, V4, F3, N3, S3

Day Seven: V4, S4, N4, F4, Vph, F4, N4, S4, V4

Day Eight: S4, N4, F4, Vph, Sph, Vph, F4, N4, S4

Day Nine: Vph, Sph, Nph, Fph, V1/4, Fph, Nph, Sph, Vph

Day Ten: Sph, Nph, Fph, V1/4, S1/4, V1/4, Fph, Nph, Sph

Day Eleven: V1/4, S1/4, N1/4, F1/4, Vph, F1/4, N1/4, S1/4, V1/4

Day Twelve: S1/4, N1/4, F1/4, Vph, Sph, Vph, F1/4, N1/4, S1/4

Day Thirteen: Sph, Nph, Fph, V1/3, S1/3, V1/3, Fph, Nph, Sph

Day Fourteen: V1/3, S1/3, N1/3, F1/3, Vph, F1/3, N1/3, S1/3, V1/3

Day Fifteen: V1/3, S1/3, N1/3, F1/3, Vcl, F1/3, N1/3, S1/3, V1/3

Day Sixteen: S1/3, N1/3, F1/3, Vcl, Scl, Vcl, F1/3, N1/3, S1/3

Day Seventeen: Vcl, Scl, Ncl, Fcl, V1/2, Fcl, Ncl, Scl, Vcl

Day Eighteen: Scl, Ncl, Fcl, V1/2, S1/2, V1/2, Fcl, Ncl, Scl

Day Nineteen: V1/2, S1/2, N1/2, F1/2, Vcl, F1/2, N1/2, S1/2, V1/2

Day Twenty: V1/2, S1/2, N1/2, F1/2, Vsn, F1/2, N1/2, S1/2, V1/2

Day Twenty-One: Scl, Ncl, Fcl, Vsn, Ssn, Vsn, Fcl, Ncl, Scl

On day one you drill at speeds from 60 words per minute to 180 words per minute. On day twenty-one you might average as fast as 900 words per minute. But, because clauses and sentences come in different sizes, you might drill as high as four times that, which would be 3,600 words per minute. Comprehension at high speeds is quite different from comprehension at low speeds. Experiencing this difference is an important part of your training. You will challenge your brain to make sense of information faster than you might have thought possible. Let your experience be your guide. By pushing up from the early speeds of 60 words per minute all the way to 3,600 words per minute you will gain experience with three vital tasks:

- Reading larger groups of words.
- Accurately assessing the speed that works best for you.
- Sensing the difference between clear, meaningful reading compared with reading at lower levels of involvement and comprehension.

These experiences will help you choose the best approach to take with different types of reading material. When you read for pleasure you can work at a speed and word group size that gives you the most fun or satisfaction. When you read for a test you can choose a speed and word group size that works best for gathering data. Doing the drills helps you know which speeds, and which word group sizes, work best for different goals. With this knowledge firmly planted in your mind as result of your own experience, you will naturally do what works best for you.

There is one primary difficulty with these drills: phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs come in different sizes. Some sentences are exactly one word long. Some paragraphs are exactly one sentence long, which means some paragraphs are exactly one word long. It is hard to set up smoothly increasing levels of difficulty when the size of word groups varies so much. The drills take this into account two ways. First, you do some drills based on number of words or based on dividing a line of print into two or more parts. Second, other drills direct you straight to word groups based on meaning. Phrases, clauses, and sentences have reliable average lengths. The average sentence may be 12 words long, the average clause five, the average phrase two. For now it is enough to know the

difference between reading an arbitrary number of words and reading a meaningful group of words. The drills teach that difference.

The drills in this chapter are set up for a three week course. Chapter four, *Other Stuff*, has another three weeks of drills. The three-week format gives the most results in the least time, but it is not set in stone. If, after attaining a reading speed of 1,000 words per minute, you decide you have had enough, great! Reading isn't a race, and faster isn't always better. If, sometime later, you want to pick up a little more speed, you can always start again. Start at the beginning, or at least a couple of notches below what is comfortable. You can repeat any of the drills as often as you like.

If you plateau at a certain speed, do drills for that speed. If your plateau is reading S1/2 (Slow speed, one-half of a line per count), look for the first day of drills with that speed (day seventeen for the example of S1/2). Repeating this drill will help stretch your ability; you can do it as many times as you like, for as many days as you like. There is always room for improvement, and improvement will always require practice. Natural speed readers read! They enjoy reading so much that they stumble onto some of the habits of speed reading. They practice reading better every time they read. If you practice more, you are likely to have better results.

What are the limits? It is hard to say. With the natural speed readers a paragraph was about the biggest meaning group used, and the speed ranged from normal to slow. While a paragraph is a variable length, think of it as about eight lines with fifteen words per line. At Slow speed this is one paragraph per second, about 7,200 words per minute. Most people would be happy to skim that fast. The only important limits are the ones you put on yourself. If you have no desire or need to read faster than 800 words per minute, guess where you are likely to stop. Let your needs and desires dictate how much time and effort you spend, and what levels of reward are right for you.

If you are the type that likes to know the reasons for what you do, then proceed straight-away to the next chapter. If you are satisfied with the drills and their effects, you might like to skip ahead to chapter three, *The Obstacles*. Chapter three deals with mental and emotional blocks to speed reading. Many people have learned to speed read, but never use the skill on a consistent basis. *The Obstacles* looks at some of the reasons for this, and provides information that can help you make the most of your new found ability.

Chapter 2

The Rationale

The Rationale

2.1 What the Drills Do

Each part of the drills serves at least one purpose. This chapter explains the five main issues addressed by the drills. They are:

- Subvocalizing
- Regression
- Word groups and Meaning
- Reading pace
- Clarity of comprehension and emotional impact

2.1.1 Subvocalization

Most readers never stop reading out loud; they just get quieter. If you watch closely, you can see some people moving their lips when they read. If their lips are still, you can still see movement in their jaw and throat. Why? Because they are reading the same way as when they read out loud. They are hearing the words “silently in their head”; this is called “subvocalizing”. Subvocalizing is not all bad. If you are waiting at a bus stop while reading poetry, then subvocalizing is a good idea, unless you want

people giving you odd looks. And, for goodness sake, don't speed read poetry. At least half the value of many poems is the way the words make rhythms and practically dance when read out loud. Speed reading doesn't capture the sound of the words, so speed reading is good for gathering data, it is good for understanding plot and action flow, but it's not so good for aural aspects of writing that are so important in much poetry and Shakespeare's plays. For some of your reading you won't care how the words sound, as long as you know what the words mean. That's the time for speed reading.

You might be wondering, "How can I know what a word means without knowing how it sounds?" This question reflects a debate in educational circles. The debate is over the relative values of two ways to teach reading: Phonics and Whole Language. Phonics teaches reading based on the sounds of words. Whole Language treats words as single units, and teaches readers to use these units as part of complete thoughts. The truth is both Phonics and Whole Language can help people learn to read. Phonics and Whole Language concepts are both very useful for reading. Phonics is a wonderful tool, a powerful intermediate step in learning to read. "Sounding words out" is often the best way to cope with an unrecognized word, even for accomplished readers. Sadly, English is poorly designed for the "sounding things out" method. Using phonics, the word "phonics" would be pronounced, "Pu-hon-iks". When you were very young you didn't know the difference between a curve and a straight line. Later this difference became so clear that now you might have trouble remembering it as something you had to learn. You also learned to put curves and lines together in various ways to make designs called letters. This too was learned so well that you probably don't think of letters as being made up of anything, but they are, aren't they? Letters are just groups of lines and curves. Written words are made up of letters, but spoken words aren't. Spoken words are made up of sounds, not letters. Most sounds have more than one letter combination. Think about the sound of to, too, and two. If all you have is the sound of the spoken word, how can you know which word is meant? Without other words to provide a context, there is no way to tell the spoken "to" from the spoken "too" or the spoken "two". Often we can understand words faster and better from the word's context than we can from "sounding out" the word. Adding to the confusion, many letter combinations make different sounds based on the letters that come before and after them. That is, many letter combinations also rely on con-

text! A famous example is the nonsense word “ghoti”. Pronounce “gh” the same way you pronounce it in “laugh”. Say “o” the way you say it in “women”. The “ti” is the same as in “action”. Put these together now: “gh” from “laugh”, “o” from “women”, “ti” from “action”. What do you get?

l		
a		a
u	w	c
GH	O	TI
	m	o
	e	n
	n	

"F" "I" "SH"

Fish! With this little example of the limits of phonics behind us, we can skip the academic arguments and agree that a person armed with both Phonics and Whole Language skills will have obvious advantages. Phonics has a permanent place in every reader’s bag of tricks, but if “sounding words out” was a requirement for reading, we would be limited to 100 words per minute or less. That’s the catch with Phonics. Fortunately, we learn to recognize many words at a glance, without needing the time and effort of sounding them out. This is the Whole Language way, but there is a catch with Whole Language as well. What is a word? Ink on a page? Sounds from a mouth? Bumps of Braille? Gestures in sign language? Or is a word something in the reader’s mind? Whatever words really are, we can use both writing and speech to transmit them. Although words come to us both through our eyes through our ears, as writing and as speech, we learn words as speech first. Spoken words precede written words. Whole Language is faster than sounding things out, phonics is a way of bridging the gap from the words we know as speech and the words we know in writing. Reading without either would be a vastly greater task.

Most people never learn to do much more than recognize written words. Once they recognize a word they speak it out loud or “in their head”, and then go on to the next word; this gets called reading. All too often this is where people stop. Most people read about two hundred words per minute because this is their speed of speech. It’s a mistake to think you have to hear a word to understand it. This mistake will hold down your

reading speed. Spoken words are made of sounds, so, if you are talking to someone then the speed of speech is about as fast as you can go. But when you read you are working with written words. Why bother hearing them? You can SEE them!

How does the drill fight sub-vocalization? Counting out loud does the trick. The part of your brain that hears noises on the outside is the same part of your brain used when you subvocalize. By counting out loud while you look at the words you keep that part of your brain busy. This forces you to find the meaning of the words by seeing them. Normally you would see the letters, convert the letters to sounds, hear the word in your head, and then interpret the meaning. Counting out loud forces you to short circuit this process and get your meaning from the sight of the words. This is why YOU MUST COUNT OUT LOUD, to occupy the part of your brain that handles sounds. This forces you to see the words without hearing them.

Starting the drills at one word per second also helps fight subvocalization. Whenever you learn new information, it helps to use methods that are comfortable for you. But what about when you learn new methods? When you learn a new method, you should use information that is comfortable. Some people call this “separating the content from the process”; separating the what from the how. Speed reading is a new way to read; so it makes sense to use easy, comfortable material for your speed reading drills. Similarly, since you are learning to read a new way, it helps if you reduce the speed pressure. This way you can gain skill with the new method of reading while counting out loud. You learn to read with your eyes instead of the part of your brain that processes sounds. Reading sixty words a minute is easy, even while counting out loud. After learning to read by sight instead of by sound, reading faster is easy. You will start with solid success, reading by sight at Very Slow, then move to faster speeds to finally break the sound barrier. Remember, you must COUNT OUT LOUD DURING DRILLS. When you read at other times you might try counting silently in your head, but when you do the drills you must count out loud. Counting out loud during drills breaks the habit of subvocalizing.

2.1.2 Regression

The next purpose of the drills is to fight regression. Often the mind wanders while reading. When this happens you might re-read a word, sentence, or passage several times before finally continuing. This also happens in normal conversation. The listener fades out for a bit and then asks to have part of the conversation repeated. Regression is a fancy way of saying that sometimes we read things over and over without really getting it. Sometimes our concentration slips and we don't really notice what's going on as we turn the page. This is a huge time waster. It is better to understand what you read the first time you read it. As with sub-vocalization, regression isn't always bad. Sometimes the fun of reading is finding a book so challenging that you are forced to stop and re-read a section, as if asking yourself, "Now what did that mean?" Other times you might re-read a passage simply to enjoy the beauty of it a second time. This is good in the right time and place. Most of the time we would be better off to understand what we are reading the first time.

How do the drills fight regression? By practicing at different speeds and with differently sized word groups, the drill makes you more aware of when you understand material and when you don't. You practice getting it right the first time. You build momentum and make a habit of moving steadily forward. You get the immediate reward of feeling certain when you understand, and instant feedback, a feeling of uncertainty when you don't understand what you have read. Reading one word at a time at fast speed can result in understanding less than reading word pairs at normal speed. Once you have experienced this a few times it will be second nature to read at the speed and word group size that gives the most satisfaction. You will also be much more sensitive to when your attention is wavering. When your attention starts to waver, take a break, at least for a minute. This break is a good time to think about what you have been reading. The drill gives you practice at noticing what it is like to go from high comprehension to low comprehension and back again. You get to experience what it is like to have the different kinds of understanding and comprehension that come with different reading styles. Having more structured experience with this helps you automatically adjust your reading methods to meet your needs.

2.1.3 One Word at a Time

We don't think one word at a time; we think in pictures and feelings and noises and smells and tastes. Then we use words to try to convey these experiences to other people. We still don't use the words one at a time at this point, because words can't be fully defined or understood without other words around them.

Untrained readers take in word pairs or phrases automatically. You may recall reading in Chapter 1 that a speed of 360 words per minute is easier than reading 180 words per minute. There is nothing magical or illogical about this. The speed of 180 words per minute came from forcing you to read in an unnatural manner, one word at a time, at an unnaturally fast speed. This is what most people do when they try to "speed read", and it just doesn't work. Doing drills with different word group sizes and at different speeds gives you clear evidence that perceived speed is as important as words per minute. Reading at the proper perceived speed will allow you to dramatically increase the size of the word groups that you read. The drills teach you to adjust your perceived speed and word group size to fit your material, your mood, and your reading needs.

Since we don't think one word at a time, it doesn't make sense to read that way. Once you break the subvocalizing habit you can start reading larger word groups. This is even true for reading out loud. A good "performance" reader doesn't read word by word. Instead they read ahead, and figure out—mostly in the back of their minds—which words go together and which ones don't. Then they alter their speed and volume and voice tone for different groups of words; that's what makes the reading come alive. Reading groups of words is even more important in speed reading than it is in performance reading. No word stands alone.

In speed reading we break the habit of pretending that words in isolation have meaning. Instead we look at word groups. The drill starts with single words for the same reason we start counting at one count per second. It is important to start with success and build from there; that's why the drills start with Very Slow and single words. But the very first drill introduces the experience of working with word pairs. It may seem odd, at first, to count word pairs and ask yourself, "Do these words go together?" This helps make you conscious of something you already do. Once you get the knack of working with pairs, start looking for pairs of pairs, then phrases, clauses, and sentences.

One issue with other systems is they place undue emphasis on words, lines, and pages. No one reads that way. What you will learn to do is look for larger and larger meaning-based word groups. This is the same kind of task as when you went from noticing curves and lines to noticing letters. First you looked at squiggles, lines and curves and the placement of little things that make the difference between a b and a p and a d or between a p and a q. Eventually you didn't need to look so close at individual pieces because you could recognize the whole pattern. Later you did much the same thing in the move from letters to sounds; this is what makes phonics work. Later still, you stopped paying attention to the individual sounds in favor of sound groups that make words; except that most people don't go all the way with this last step. Phonics is part of why most people never make the break from words to larger word groups such as phrases and clauses. Letters have sounds associated with them. We learn most words as sounds first, and as written letters second. There is a difference between how the spoken word sounds and how the same word would be pronounced phonetically. This difference holds most people back from learning to read larger word groups. You know the word "action" doesn't sound like "act-eye-on". You know what it really sounds like, and you also know what it means without the sound. When you speed read, you process letters to make meaning without the sounds.

Counting breaks subvocalization and confirms that you don't need to hear a word to understand it. Add the idea that there are larger and more useful meaning units to pay attention to and you really get a boost in speed. If you use that speed for reading the newspaper, you will have time left over to enjoy the beauty of the words in other kinds of reading, at whatever speed you choose.

Looking at word pairs puts you in a receptive mode for noticing larger meaningful word groups. You already know plenty about how words fit together. Linguists call this "constituent structure", a fancy way of saying you know what does, and what does not, make a meaningful group of words. Think about the sentence:

The painter of the mural hoped the public would like his work.

The words "The" and "painter" do not fit together the way "painter" and "of" do. The word "hoped" goes with the word "painter" in a way that it doesn't go with "work". You know all of these things without having to think about them. Normally you wouldn't stop to think about how the

words go together, any more than you think about the specific muscles you use to shake someone's hand. However, when you do stop to ask yourself, "Do these words go together?" you are using an important part of your mind with extra precision. As a result you will naturally start seeing larger groups.

There is a problem that comes up because of the way word groups are laid out on the page. Perhaps in a perfect world each new sentence would start a new line, and when the sentence ended the line would end. Instead, we use capitals and periods because doing it the other way takes too much space. What we end up with is a system where some sentences take up several lines, and some lines have more than one sentence. Sometimes a whole paragraph is only one word long. Maybe you remember asking your teacher, "How long is a paragraph?" One teacher told my seventh grade English class that a sentence is a complete thought. The next week, the same teacher told us that a paragraph is a complete thought. How could they be the same? Don't worry, even if you can't define the difference between a sentence and a paragraph, you still know what the difference is. You know it the same way you know the difference between, "The cat ate the rat," and, "The rat ate the cat". The same words are in both sentences, but you intuitively knew how very different these two sentences were many years before you ever heard about subjects, verbs, or objects.

There is no limit, in theory, to the size of a meaningful word group. In theory a book is a meaningful word group all it's own. In reality there are limits to the word group sizes we can use for reading. The natural speed readers I have studied say the paragraph is an upper limit. Some systems claim a they will teach page at a glance reading. Because a page is a "printing group" instead of a "meaning group" it seems unlikely that anyone ever really reads a page at a time. Chapter Three, *The Obstacles*, discusses the page-a-second claim in more detail.

When you read phrases and clauses, you will begin to notice how often certain words occur. These words don't really have much effect on the meaning of the sentence, but good grammar requires them. We use tone of voice and facial expressions and gestures to keep things clear when we talk. Since these things are missing in print, we use helper words to keep things clear in print. You wouldn't say things they way you write them, and when you read at the larger meaning group levels you become aware of the amount of repetition and "non-meaning" words that are used in writing. As you get used to seeing these helper words they will let you

take in even bigger groups of words. In a sentence such as

The cat chased the rat

there are five words, but only three meaning groups

1. The cat
2. chased
3. the rat

We use “the” in two of those groups for grammar, but you don’t really need to pay much attention to them to understand the sentence and “see” the action. The more you drill with larger word groups the more you will automatically take in these kinds of words leaving your mind free to make pictures and understand meanings. You will even notice phrases that work the same way as helper words, letting you take in still larger groups.

2.1.4 Pacing Your Eyes

Every other system I have studied teaches you to pace your eyes by waving your hand over the page. This is supposed to make your eyes go faster than normal. Evelyn Wood and other speed reading teachers accord to hand movements a magical status completely out of proportion with their true value. The roots for this bizarre practice can be found in the story of how Wood “discovered” speed reading. The story goes that Wood was reading some book of fiction the usual way. Wood got mad and tossed the book aside, where it landed in some dirt. Magically, when she later picked up the book, she brushed some of the dirt off the page, and suddenly was reading at thousands of words per minute. This story can be found in many books as the explanation for using unnatural hand movements to pace the eyes. The traditional telling of the myth omits two important factors. First, some tellers of the tale fail to mention that Wood was methodically trying to learn to speed read. Wood was interviewing “natural” speed readers, trying to find out how they achieved their results. Second, the natural speed readers Wood studied did not use hand pacing. Not one of the naturals I have studied pace by hand. If the people Wood’s studied had used hand pacing, she would have been honor bound to place the credit where it belongs, with the natural speed readers she studied.

Other speed reading systems teach you to move your hand over the lines very fast. There are two problems with this practice. First, doing any thing at fast speed tends to get in the way of reading. If you have practiced the drill much you have already know that it is much easier to read a clause at a moderate speed than it is to read five individual words at fast speed.

The second big problem with hand pacing is that it is awkward and uncomfortable. Reading is a physical skill. Coordination of the eye muscles to control focus while you read is a hard enough task. The drills in this system give you that coordination in a smooth, step-wise fashion. Using the hand to pace the eyes just gets in the way of training the eyes, and it makes you look ridiculous! The need for hand pacing is eliminated by the counting and by starting at 60 words per minute. By starting at an absurdly slow speed you practice pacing your eyes, without pointing at the page. This title of this book comes from this very important concept, that you can pace your eyes without using your hand. Varying the speed during a drill is like lifting variable weights. Your eye muscles literally become more coordinated just from doing the drill, without using your hand to point at the page.

2.1.5 Clearer Pictures and Stronger Emotions

In the end, the time and effort spent doing drills are only validated if you are reading “faster and better”. The speed issue will come quickly and easily. So will the quality, for when you stop subvocalizing you will find that you are making clearer pictures, having stronger feelings, and understanding more. This is because you are reading for meaning instead of for words. When you read for meaning you get more meaning. This gives better pictures and visualization, with better understanding and emotional impact, all while spending less time reading. This is an exponential reward; higher yield for less invested. That is what speed reading is all about, and it can't be emphasized enough. Why bother to read at all? Why not rent a movie, or better still, why not do something active?

There are two basic reasons to read; for fun, or to make a parent, teacher, friend or boss happy. If you are reading not from your own choice but because a boss or teacher or parent requires you to read, then this method is for you. You will get more done in less time and with less effort than you

ever imagined. If you are reading for fun, the above is just as true, because you will get more fun from your books when you read at the speed that works best for you. You will know when to go fast and when to go slow. Poetry should not be read quickly. Many fine pieces of literature are meant to be savored. You should always adjust your speed up or down to suit your needs and mood.

2.1.6 What the Drills Do—Conclusion

The drills in chapter one do many things for you. The drills teach you to pace your eyes without using your hand. At the same time, the drills prevent regression. Comprehension goes up when you read by meaning groups. With increased comprehension come clearer pictures and stronger emotional responses. Reading several words at a time increases your speed. **THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP IS COUNTING OUT LOUD.** Counting out loud breaks subvocalization. This is the most important step in the system. Once you break subvocalization, the rest comes naturally. Once you stop subvocalizing, you will naturally rise to a new level of reading, even without the formal drills. As long as you subvocalize you will be chained to “speed of speech” reading. Counting out loud works, just keep in mind that counting out loud is only for drills. You won’t actually read while counting out loud unless you so choose. For doing the drills, for breaking the shackles of subvocalization, there is no substitute for counting out loud.

The good news about counting out loud is that it works. Other systems teach pacing by hand and leave the subvocalization problem to blind luck. Hand pacing does nothing to break subvocalization. Hand pacing is useless until the reader figures out how to break the subvocalization habit. Some people break the subvocalization habit without knowing how they did it, but the drills make it possible for anyone to succeed at breaking the habit of subvocalizing, if you **COUNT OUT LOUD!** In reward for doing the drills and counting out loud, you free yourself from the habit of subvocalization. The drills in this book teach you to speed read easily and naturally, anytime, anywhere. So, pick a private place, drill out loud for ten minutes a day, and reap the rewards!!

2.2 What Makes the Drills Work

People who observe different phenomena offer different descriptions of how your mind works. The description offered here is based on one criterion: it fits the facts of speed reading. There is no claim to ultimate or final truths on this issue. With the foregoing disclaimer in mind, let's think a bit about how your mind works.

Imagine you have a cup full of sand. First, pour out three-fourths of it. Then pour out three-fourths of what's left. Now pour out half of the remainder. After throwing away so much of the sand, you couldn't possibly pretend the cup is still full, could you? Of course not. But this is exactly what we do most of the time when we think about reality. Our first level of contact with reality is our senses, but our senses just aren't up to the task. As an example, think about the sense of sound. Everyone knows that dogs can hear things we can't. It's just as if our ears took the information that dogs get and threw it away. Our eyes have the same problem; we only see a small fraction of the electro-magnetic spectrum. Snakes navigate by taste! We could never do that. Truth is, the real world has much about it that our senses will never be able to detect. And that is just the beginning.

Our senses funnel in only a small amount of information about the real world, but the difference between what we **can** sense and what we **do** sense is enormous. Most people have never seen the Taj Mahal in person, or the Sphinx, or the Great Wall of China. These things can be sensed, but most of us never get the chance. The difference between what we could sense and what we do sense can be called experience.

Our senses only give us a subset of reality, and our experience is only a subset of what is available to our senses. But we're not done pouring out sand just yet, because we notice only a small portion of what we experience; call this little bit perception. As an example, most of the time we don't perceive our breath. This doesn't mean that we weren't breathing, or that our breathing didn't stimulate the nerves that sense feelings; it just means that those signals lost the competition for certain resources either through failure to rise above a threshold value for that sensation or because competing signals were stronger. What exactly are the resources in question? We call it attention, as in "pay attention to your breathing." But there is still some debate as to what that actually means, some confusion about the true role of conscious attention in human behavior.

In review, our perceptions are a subset of our experiences; our expe-

periences are a subset of what we could have sensed, and what we could have sensed is a subset of reality. Unfortunately most of us mistake our perceptions for reality all too often.

It's time for more imagination. This time, pretend you are looking at a lake, high up in the mountains. As you look you notice the lake has five streams that feed into it. There is also an outlet that flows out the other end of the lake. Clearly, the lake is made up of the water coming in from the five streams.

The mountain lake is another way of thinking about how your mind works. There is a lot of talk about how the human mind is like a computer, but that is stating the relationship in reverse. The computer is a super-fast adding machine that works with strings of 1's and 0's to simulate certain functions of the human mind. Actually, the human mind works much more like the mountain lake than like an adding machine. Like the mountain lake, the human mind is constantly changing, always taking in new information, never the same from moment to moment. The five streams are the five senses; the outlet represents our actions and behaviors as perceived by others. The surface of the lake is what some people call the conscious mind; the unconscious mind is the rest of the lake.

Did you ever wonder what your unconscious mind is? One interesting opinion is offered by researcher George Miller, in a paper called "The Magic Number 7 +/- 2". This paper described Miller's efforts to measure the conscious mind. Miller concluded that most people, most of the time, can consciously pay attention to about seven things. When people relax and feel sharp the number goes up to nine; when they are tense and stressed the number goes down to five. At any moment, the five (or seven, or nine) things you have in mind make up your conscious mind; the rest is your unconscious. What you aren't conscious of is your unconscious. This may sound overly simple, but it works. The drills take advantage of Miller's work by helping you increase the attention paid to meaningful groups of words, while paying less and less attention to individual words in isolation.

Another vital aspect of Miller's work is called "Chunking". Miller's research pointed out that most people, most of the time, have about seven "chunks" of conscious attention, but it turns out that a chunk can be any size. It is as easy to think consciously about seven planets as it is to think about seven peanuts, according to Miller's work. This is why you drill with different sized groups of words. The word "decided" can be broken

into several different kinds of chunks: it can be seven letters, three syllables, or one word. Just as letters combine to make words, words combine to make larger chunks. Most of us read at the one-word-at-a-time level because we aren't taught to practice seeing larger chunks.

Here is a third way to look at the way your mind works: pretend you have five brains. This is just a way of describing things, but it is interestingly useful. People often act as if there were a separate brain for each of their senses; a seeing brain, a feeling brain, a hearing brain, a smelling brain, and a tasting brain. These five brains work together sometimes, but other times they each work on their own agendas.

What about talking to your self, imagining things, and memories of sensation? These are each handled by the five brains. When you talk to yourself you keep your hearing brain busy. When you daydream and visualize what you will see on vacation you are keeping your seeing brain busy. Whether processing sensations from the world outside, or internal creations and memories, it's the same five brains at work.

One great thing about the human mind is the ability to do more than one thing at a time. Do you ever drive your car, listen to the radio, and converse with a passenger, all at the same time? That is an everyday example of parallel processing. Eating dinner while watching TV is another good example. Parallel processing is just a label for doing more than one thing at a time. Five brain theory gives one explanation for parallel processing. Information comes to us constantly from all five of the senses. Often what we hear has nothing to do with what we see. Often what we are looking at has nothing to do with what we are touching. When you drive, you can see the road, and your hands can move the steering wheel even if you are busy talking to a passenger or singing along with the radio. Your body can respond to the visual input even though you are also busy with sound input.

Cross-referencing is the flip-side of parallel processing. Parallel processing is like each brain doing its own thing. Cross-referencing is when activity in one brain triggers activity in the other brains. An ex-lover's cologne, the scent of fresh cut grass, the odor of a new car, the aroma of a hospital; any of these can bring back memories strong enough to make you smile or cringe. The smells trigger pictures and sounds and feelings. It's as if the smelling brain sends a signal to the other brains saying, "Hey, any of you have something to match up with this?"

Here is another useful set of ideas about how your mind works to

consider before we get to clarifying what all this has to do with speed reading. The main premise came from research done on surgery patients. The surgery disconnected the two hemispheres of the brain. This research identified two kinds of thinking, sometimes called “Linear” and “Global”. Experiments showed that the left half of the brain controls the right side of the body. The left half of the brain is also responsible for language, for talking and understanding words. The right side of the brain controls the left side of the body, and is responsible for pictures. Words only work when presented in a line, whereas pictures work all at once; you can see a whole picture at a glance. The two parts of the brain divide the labor; one part processes words and the other part processing pictures. This division means each side gets used to working either with little bits in a row (language) or with everything all at once (pictures). Language is linear, pictures are global, and each side of the brain specializes in one or the other.

With spoken words you have no choice but to take them as they come, one at a time. But when you write words on a page you run into trouble. Your eyes see the page like a picture. The right side of the brain naturally and automatically wants to see the whole page at once, which will only lead to chaos. The conflict between the linear word processing side of the brain and the global picture processing side of the brain may even be implicated in dyslexia.

Don’t make the mistake of thinking that linear is better than global or that global is better than linear. Picture thinking (also called global, analogic, holistic, or right-brain thinking) and word thinking (also called particular, digital, linear, or left-brain thinking) are both extremely useful and valuable. No one can be complete without a good helping of both kinds of thinking. Imagine a world of words with no pictures to attach them to, or a world of sights that could never be described. The ability to bridge the gap, to use both picture thinking and word thinking is essential to being fully alive, fully human.

Process and content are fancy ways of saying “how” and “what”. Process is how a thing is done; content is the stuff on or with which the process works. As an example, words are the content of your reading; subvocalizing or not subvocalizing is the how of your reading. Using these terms together gives the greatest advantage. As a rule of thumb, if you want to teach someone something new, you should use a familiar method or process. We see this with children learning their multiplication tables; they

use verbal repetition just as they did when learning their ABC's. Later they associate what they have learned using verbal repetition with sequences of written symbols: numbers and mathematical operators. A child who fails to make this connection will do poorly in mathematics.

To repeat: if you want to teach new content, use a familiar process. But what if you want to teach a new process or method? When teaching a new method, a new process, a new "how to", you should use content that is simple and easy for the student. This is why the drills start out at one word per second. Sixty words a minute is super-easy for most people. By setting the speed to make the content easy the drills make it easy to focus on the new process of reading while counting out loud. For this same reason you will want to practice the drills using a book that is fairly easy for you. Drill time is the right time for childhood favorites like the Wizard of Oz, but the wrong time for the latest best seller on some topic totally new to you.

Another thing to keep in mind, each of your "five brains", each of your senses can be used to process both types of information. Your eyes usually bring your pictures to be seen as a whole, but not when reading. When you read your eyes have to deal with linear information. On the other hand, listening to waves crashing at the shore, or listening to the sound of a river as it flows is using your ears to process global information. No amount of linear words will ever capture the sound of the ocean's roar. Each of your senses can gather and deal with both types of information. Each of your "five brains" will deal better with one kind of information than with the other, but they each can make do with either linear or global information in a pinch.

Five brain theory is not a real theory, it's just a way to talk about your mind and how it works; but the left-brain/right-brain theory is based on good science. This gives us a total of seven kinds of brains, falling into two groups. First comes the "five brains" of the senses; this is a content group. These five brains group together because they identify the type of content being processed; sights, sounds, feelings, smells, or tastes. The other group, linear versus global, is a process group. Each process can handle each type of content, and vice-versa. In the next section we will talk about all seven kinds of brains. It is important to remember it's all just a way to describe what goes on in your head. It is also important to remember that five of the brains are really just a way of talking about the type of content being handled. The other two are a way to talk about the

way that content is handled.

Frames of Reference and Re-framing

No word has meaning without a frame of reference. A word has meaning only when it is referenced to a listener's, or a reader's experience. This is simple enough to see, and thinking in these terms is a good habit. When we don't understand another person's actions it often helps to check their frame of reference. Without a web of associated sights and sounds and feelings we could never make meaning of anything. As noted before, we can't even understand as simple a word as "run" without a frame of reference. If the reference is a picture of a race track with horses coming around the final turn, run will mean what the horses are doing. If the reference is a picture of a woman's panty hose with small tear, run will mean the tear. If the picture is of Alaskan salmon swimming up stream to spawn, run will mean what the fish are doing. Without frames of reference, without a web of sights, sounds, feelings, smells, or tastes, we have no way to make sense of the world around us.

Frames of reference control the way we interpret events, so it is a good idea to have ways to change a person's frame of reference. There's a classic zen story about a Chinese farmer who loses his horse. The farmer's neighbors tell him how sorry they are for the farmer, but he only replies, "Is that so?" Soon the horse returns, and with it comes a second horse. All the farmer's friends tell him how glad they are for his good fortune, but he only replies, "Is that so?" A week later, while trying to break the new horse, the farmer's oldest son—his most valuable worker—is thrown from the horse and breaks his leg. Again the neighbors offer sympathy, again the farmer replies, "Is that so?" When the warlord's men come through a week later, conscripting all the able-bodied young men in the village, the son with the broken leg is left behind. The neighbors proclaimed the farmer's incredible good luck not to have lost his son to the warlord—you can guess the farmer's reply. Losing the horse was bad when the frame of reference was needing a plow animal, but it was good when the frame of reference was doubling the farmer's "horse power". Having a second horse was good when the frame of reference was having more horse power, but it was bad when the frame of reference was breaking the son's leg. A son with a broken leg was bad in the frame of reference of getting the farm work done, but it was good when the frame of reference

became not losing him forever to an army. All of this switching back and forth can be confusing. How can you say if the horse's getting lost was good or bad? Consider the event with any one frame of reference in mind and you can come to a clear answer; but if you take them all into account the answer is not so clear.

Most people use their most recent experiences as the reference structure for the present. This can make trouble because what happened five minutes ago might have nothing to do with what is happening now. Stories like the one about the farmer help us remember to look for different frames of reference when interpreting life's events. Looking for alternate frames of reference is the first step in learning to change our frames of reference.

2.2.1 Examples

Reading as Cross-Referencing

Let's think for a bit about how the ideas described above apply to reading. Right off the bat you might notice reading is an example of cross-referencing. There is nothing chair-like about the word chair, but with those lines and curves making letters in that order, the seeing brain says to the others, "Anyone got something to go with this?" Usually the hearing brain answers, "Sure, I've got some sounds here. Anyone got stuff to go with these sounds?" Before long your five brains have gathered up a collection of images and feelings that go with the sounds that go with the letters of the written form of the word chair. Reading involves cross-referencing among the various senses. Since the right side of the brain does most seeing, and the left side of the brain processes most words, reading involves cross-referencing between the two sides of the brain. The drills take this into account; it is why you must count out loud.

Counting out loud as parallel processing

Counting out loud is an example of parallel processing. Counting out loud keeps the hearing brain busy, cutting off the chance to sub-vocalize. Counting out loud gives the hearing brain something to keep it busy and out of the way. Meanwhile the feeling brain is working from the speed of the counting to control the eye muscles, which lets the seeing brain get

its information in a smooth linear fashion. Finally the seeing brain cross-references the words (or phrases, clauses, sentences, etc.) from the linear part of the brain to the global part of the brain, getting meaning in the form of pictures and feelings about those meanings and pictures. As you improve with the skills of speed reading you will be less and less aware of the words on the page. Instead, you will be and more and more aware of the pictures, sounds, and feelings that go with the meanings of the words.

Hand pacing as superstition

Cross-referencing and parallel processing can be great things, but they can also cause problems. One great example is the story of Evelyn Wood. As mentioned earlier in this book, Ms. Wood was trying to learn how to speed read. She interviewed and studied speed readers, but couldn't quite master their methods. One day, while trying to speed read she became frustrated and tossed her book to the ground. Later, after the frustration ebbed, she picked up the book to try again, but noticed dirt on the pages. Wood used her hand to sweep away the dirt and suddenly found herself reading faster than she ever imagined—so of course she decided that the hand moving in a sweeping motion is what did the trick.

Wood went on to pioneer the teaching of speed reading, but all her work assumed the need for hand pacing. She knew of the need to break subvocalization, but she didn't have concepts that let her address this problem directly. She was, no doubt, sincere in her belief that hand pacing was a necessity. How did this happen? And why call hand pacing a superstition?

Let's start by agreeing on what is meant by the term "superstition". Superstition is believing an item or action has an effect that it doesn't really have. Common examples are carrying a rabbit's foot, yelling at a bowling ball as it rolls towards the pins, and wearing a lucky hat when playing poker. None of these things have any effect but people do them every day.

Superstitions come to us in several ways. Sometimes we are simply told about them. Things like walking under ladders or black cats crossing your path are usually passed on this way. More interesting are the superstitions we make up on our own. These personalized superstitions come from a simple mistake of thinking, a mistake so powerful that some people never stop making it.

Imagine seeing a shooting star, and five minutes later finding a one-hundred dollar bill in the road. When two events happen close in time there is a tendency to think they are related. When stated clearly we can see that it is utter nonsense to assume any relationship between the shooting star and the money. The only relation between the star and the money is time. Because time plays such a strong part in how our minds work, it is natural to make this kind of mistake. When something good happens we look for a way to make it happen again, and we usually latch onto the last thing we noticed before the good thing happened.

The story of the superstitious horse can help us understand how something like Wood's superstition of hand pacing can be so powerful. Psychologists rigged a horse's stall with a metal plate beneath one of the horse's hooves. The metal plate was hooked to a circuit so it would shock the horse. The experimenters would ring a bell a few seconds before electrifying the metal plate. Soon the horse "learned" that the bell "caused" the shock, and started lifting its hoof as soon as the bell rang. The big test came after the experimenters stopped electrifying the plate. When the bell rang, the horse still lifted its hoof. How was the horse to know that the plate was no longer electrified when it never touched the metal plate? Similarly, it seems that Wood's belief in hand pacing was enough, when combined with what success her system had, to keep others from even trying to speed read without hand pacing.

Reference Frames for Speed Reading

Tops and Gyroscopes as Frames of Reference for Bicycling Speed reading requires special frames of reference. Without certain experiences to refer to, speed reading is almost impossible for most people to learn. Whereas natural speed readers stumble upon these experiences, the drills provide you directly with the required frames of reference.

Do you know how to ride a bicycle? Maybe you learned by using training wheels, as many people do. Training wheels give a youngster some of the feelings of bicycling, but there is a draw back. Training wheels prevent the cyclist from experiencing a unique aspect of cycling, which is the sense of balancing in line with the movement of the bike. To make training wheels work one or both of the training wheels must be in touch with the road yet they are often set so high a child can't even be truly upright while riding. Instead the child leans one way to get one of the training wheels

on the ground, to get the sense of stability they crave. This is the exact opposite of what a competent cyclist does.

Why do children need training wheels at all? They see people riding bicycles, they know the bike stays up somehow, but they don't know how. It is scary to get on something that can fall over without knowing what is holding it up. What does hold up a bicycle? The answer is easy, but for most people it is totally unconscious. The cyclist makes constant adjustments to their position, and those adjustments are geared to spin of the wheels. Competent cyclists know that below a certain speed a bike is less steady. Often you will see a cyclist push off to get the bike rolling as they mount; this gets them up to the critical speed at which the bike starts to stabilize itself. Have you ever tried walking your bike by holding the seat instead of holding the handle bars? If you go fast enough, the front wheel will just about keep itself upright. If you go too slow you spend all of your time trying to tilt the bike frame back and forth to get the front wheel in line.

The principle involved is the same as that which keeps a spinning top upright. Spin a top fast enough and it will stand on a point. As the top loses speed it starts to wobble and finally falls over. Gyroscopes work the same way. Here's an experiment to try. With a string, suspend a gyroscope from one side of its axle. Next, hold the other side of the axle to the wheel is upright. You can spin the wheel and remove your hand—wheel will stay upright. I do this as a demonstration in my speed reading classes; but, instead of a little gyroscope, I use a bicycle wheel. It makes quite an impression to see the wheel, held only on one side of the axle, spinning perfectly upright! Learning to feel and use the stabilizing force of a spinning wheel is a large part of cycling competence. If a child (or their teacher) doesn't know about this goal, how can they achieve it? If more children knew about this goal from seeing the wheel experiment described above, there might be a sharp drop in training wheel sales. Once a person has this experience as a frame of reference they never lose it. You can go years without getting on a bike, but the feeling of working with the stabilizing force produced by the wheel's spinning comes right back, "Just like riding a bike."

Drills as Frames of Reference for Information Without Subvocals Tops and gyroscopes and the feeling of stabilization are the frames of reference

for bicycling; what are the required frames of reference for speed reading? The most important frame of reference for speed reading is the experience of reading a word and knowing what it means, without hearing it. Remember the tests in the opening of this book, where you were asked to recite the pledge of allegiance or sing jingle bells? Those tests had one purpose, to give the experience of reading without subvocalizing. Reading while vocalizing something unrelated gives that experience. The rest of the drills continue to develop this frame of reference.

Drill as Frame of Reference for Meaningful Word Groups The drills also provide experience with the difference between reading one word at a time and reading larger word groups. Some word groups are based on the number of words in the group. Some word groups are based on how you divide a line of print. The most important word groups are the ones based on meaning: phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs. It is nearly impossible to do three weeks of the drills and not come to the clear understanding that you can read more than one word at a time. Using the drills, most people find it is easier to read multiple words in a group than it is to read one word at a time.

Faster & Better?

The idea of speed reading assumes you want to read faster. Most people assume that faster is better and slowing down should be minimized. What a tragically limited view of reading! Poetry is an obvious example of faster being worse. Much poetry is meant to be savored, to roll around in the mind. If you speed read poetry you will get the data from the words, but you aren't as likely to get the subtleties of emotion. Often the longer you mull over a good poem, the better it gets. Good poetry gets better as you re-read it with different inflections, it gets better as you search for deeper meanings. And what is true of poetry can be equally true of all writing—often slower is better.

Part of the problem comes from the way we use words. Most of us use words without thinking of what they mean, which is the way words should work. Imagine the time wasted if, every time you wanted to say, "Pass me the salt," you had to say, "Pass me that container of granulated sodium-chloride". The second version is closer to what you really mean; but, luckily, most people know what you mean when you use the first

version. Most of the time we can rely on words to mean what we generally think they mean. On the other hand, it is a mistake to forget that a group of words just might mean something unexpected. Many of life's biggest problems have their root in this kind of mistake.

Most words have several forms, each with a shade difference from all of the others. A great example of this is the word "believe". Written this way we use "believe" as a verb, as in the sentence,

I believe everything I read

Another way to say nearly the same thing is,

Everything I read gives me a belief

These two sentences share one essential meaning, but the words used to express that meaning change quite a bit. In the second sentence, the verb "believe" has changed into the noun "belief". What we have here is two versions of the same idea; in one version the idea shows up as an action, in the other version the idea shows up as a thing. That's part of the magic of language, verbs can become nouns, and this lets us say things many, many different ways. Just as saying, "Pass me the salt," is usually better than saying, "Pass me that container of granulated sodium-chloride", so too there are many times when talking about beliefs is better than talking about what you believe, even though they mean much the same thing. In the English language it is usually easier to talk about things than it is to talk about actions. People don't ask, "How do you earn your living?" Instead they ask, "What do you do?" The word "what" is the question word for persons, places and things, but we use it when we want to know how a person pays their bills. That's more language magic.

Like anything magical, language has to be used carefully. The same magic that can free your mind and ease your heart can also put burrs under your saddle and make your head spin. Words that shift back and forth from verb form to noun form are especially dangerous, because we don't often think about how much words can change. Things are what they are, or so we assume most of time. When the "thing" in question is as intangible as a belief, we can get into a lot of trouble. Take two sentences:

I have had this necklace since I was eighteen.

and

I have had this belief since I was eighteen.

The words “necklace” and “belief” are both nouns. They each act as the object of the sentence. You can put a necklace on a scale and see how much it weighs. But what if I asked you how much the belief weighs? What answer could you give? You certainly couldn’t put a belief on a scale. Because belief is intangible we know it is really an alternative version of the action “believe”.

Another good example is “relationship”. Early in a new romance we may say, “I like this person, and they seem to like me too. So far we treat each other well”. Then we can say, “I like the way we get along. I like the way we relate”. Later we say, “We have a good relationship”. Still later, if things don’t work out, we say, “What a lousy relationship that turned out to be”. If this happens often enough, we soon say, “I have bad luck with relationships”. Compare the two versions:

What a lousy relationship that turned out to be.

and

As we learned more about each other we didn’t like each other so much. And as we spent more time together, we sometimes treated each other poorly.

Sure, the “bad luck” version is quicker, almost like mental short hand. But notice, there is no sense of responsibility, no sense of hope for making things better in the future. Now look at the long version. The “As we learned” version makes it easy and natural to think of ways to do better next time, ways to make better choices, ways to treat people better, and even ways to be treated better by others. This is more language magic. Pick one version and you might as well resign yourself to a life of loneliness. Pick the other version and you are on the way to solving the problem for future.

Another piece of language magic: some words change from noun version to verb version without changing their spelling or pronunciation. With the “relationship” and “belief” examples we get clues that something is different. “Relate” changes to “relationship”, “believe” changes to “belief.” What about words like love, trust, hope? These words are doubly tricky because they shift form without clue. The ancient question, “What is love?” is probably best answered, “Love is a verb, love is something

you do.” To make matters worse, love isn’t any single thing you do; many things you do can be called love. Which one is really “LOVE”? That is like asking which kind of “run” is the real one. One home dictionary lists 88 versions, bigger dictionaries have as many as 140. Run is two kinds of verb, a noun, and an adjective, and each one is the real meaning of “run”! Here are some common meanings for “I love”:

- I approve of...
- I enjoy mightily...
- I desire the presence of...
- I treat well...
- I have sex with...
- My sense of well being requires the well being of...

That’s a lot of ground to cover for one small word. No wonder people get confused! Because they are intangible we know “run” and “love” are actions first, even though we often talk about them as things. Many beautiful things have been said about what love is; what a shame it would be if we couldn’t talk about love this way. “Run” and “love” are obvious examples of words that keep their spelling and pronunciation as they go from the verb version to the noun version. Two words less obvious examples are “understanding,” and “reading.” Both have a verb version and a noun version; both keep the same pronunciation and spelling in each form.

What is Reading?

First things first; “reading” is a version of the verb “read”. “Reading” can be an alternative verb version of “read”; it can also be a noun version of “read”. “Reading” keeps its spelling and pronunciation in both the verb and the noun versions. This makes reading a magical word, capable of great good and great mischief. We need to ask, “What does it mean to read, to be reading, to have finished reading, to have read in the past?” Answering this question helps minimize the mischief “reading” can do. As with the question, “What is love?”, there are many answers. Look in a dictionary and you will see many different meanings for the word “read”, but we will limit ourselves to meanings that involve your eyes and printed material. A simple definition of “read” is, “To gather information by seeing written material.” This is the variation of “read” used in this book.

So far so good, “read” means “gather information by seeing written material.” How do we do this? How do we gather information just by looking at a page full of marks? Most of us read by letting the seeing brain turn the sights over to the hearing brain, then the hearing brain figures out “what the words are” based on their sounds. This isn’t your only option. When you were young, instead of words, the seeing brain dealt with each letter while hoping one of the other brains would help make sense of the letters. Since most of us learn the alphabet as a song long before we can tell by sight which letter is which guess which brain comes to the rescue and identifies the letters? In the early stages of learning our letters the hearing brain performs much the same task as it does in average reading. As time goes by, we learn the alphabet so well that we don’t have to pay attention to the names and sounds of individual letters. We recognize the letters on sight, without hearing their names, without thinking. About this time we start paying attention to words instead of individual letters, but an odd thing happens. Long after we can recognize most words on sight, we continue to turn them over to the hearing brain. Why do we do this? Probably for two main reasons. First, it’s a habit. Second, no one tells us do differently. Unless we are just hungry to read as much as possible, most of us just don’t make the next step. At this next step we quit turning words over to the hearing brain and start recognizing words on sight, without hearing them, without thinking. This is really the same as when you quit hearing the names and sounds of individual letters and started paying attention to words. Reading is gathering information from seeing written words. In the same way, speed reading is gathering that information without the needless middle step of hearing the words.

What does it mean to read? Here’s another answer: it means using the brain that specializes in global information to gather linear information. Does that sound like a bit of a problem? It is. Vision works on whole images, all at once. It is unnatural to look at a piece of paper and see one bit at a time, in rows. The eye would really prefer to look at the entire page all at once. This all at once approach would be great, but word order affects meaning. Change the order of the words in a sentence and just watch the meaning change. As an example,

“The cat chased the rat”

is quite different from

“The rat chased the cat”.

Once we succeed in taking global sensations, the marks on the page, and converting them to linear data, words in sequence, we need to convert that linear data to global pictures and sounds and feelings and add them all together to make meaning. To review, we use the global visual channel to gather linear verbal information, words, then we convert the linear verbal information into global sights and sounds and feelings. Wouldn't it be great if we could skip a step? The drills teach how to skip at least part of a step. The drills force you to practice going straight from the visual words to their meanings. This is why drills start with word groups based on the number of words in a group, then switch to word groups based on meaning, such as phrases and clauses. Switching between these types of groups lets you experience the difference between arbitrary word groups and meaning-based word groups. The experience of increased comprehension that comes with reading by meaning-based word groups adds to your ability to get meaning directly from the sight of the words.

What else does it mean to read? Does it mean to have fun? If so, then what's the rush? If you are reading solely for pleasure, then who cares how fast you read? It is nobody's business how fast you read. When reading for fun you should always read just as fast, or just as slow, as you want. You should read at the speed that makes your reading most fun, and sometimes slower will be better. A great example of slower being better is mentioned in the book, “Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance”. The narrator of that book talks about traveling with his son on a cross-country motorcycle trip. There isn't much room on a motorcycle, so packing is a serious issue. The narrator always takes at least one book such as Thoreaus's “Walden”. The narrator reads to his son when they camp for the night, and after two or three pages the son always has questions; which makes “Walden” a superb book for such trips. Some books are much more fun when read slowly and mulled over or talked about with friends. Other books are only fun when read straight through, like sitting through a movie. The best books might be those that work well both at both speeds. If you are reading for fun, who is to decide what speed is most fun for you? It's true that reading faster can bring you clearer pictures and stronger emotions, but sometimes there is much to gain by going slower.

Does “read” mean anything else? Does it mean “work”? Whether at

school or on the job, most of us have a certain amount of reading that isn't much fun. What's the best way to do work reading? Sometimes fast, sometimes slow, depending on how well you know the topic, and what you are expected to do with material. When you read for work or school you read, not for fun, but for understanding. As pointed out earlier, "understanding" is a tricky word just like "reading."

What is "Understanding"?

"Understanding" comes from the word, "understand", the way "reading" comes from the word, "read", the same way "relationship" comes from the word, "relate". This time we ask, "What does it mean to understand?" This question is even harder to answer than, "What does it mean to read?" There are strong disagreements among experts about the answer. What do you mean when you say, "I understand." Often we mean, "I hear your words and follow their meanings. I am not confused by you." Most of the time this is all the understanding we need, but there are times when "understand" must mean more. How do you know someone understands you? If you are a teacher, you give a test. Teachers use tests to measure how well their students understand what has been taught. This is one way to look at understanding, and it has pluses and minuses. There are different ways to test for understanding, and each has different pros and cons.

Sometimes understanding means scoring well on a multiple choice test. This is a popular method used to test student understanding. The student is presented with a question and offered set of possible answers. Teachers expect the student to choose the right answer if they understand, and to choose a wrong answer if they don't understand. More correct answers means better understanding. There are two basic problems with this kind of understanding. First, students can choose the right answer without understanding the material. Scholastic Aptitude Test "prep" courses teach methods such as looking at the question first then skimming the material to find the answer. This is a great way to score well on tests, but it is a lousy way to understand material. The second problem is when the student understands the material well, but doesn't understand the question. One young lady, a brilliant girl with a 4.0 grade point average in a rigorous college preparatory program, received only average marks on her S.A.T.. This did nothing to prevent her from continuing on to Yale

with High Honors and following this with Berkeley Law. She was an avid reader, with deep understanding and appreciation for the written word, but the S.A.T. doesn't measure these things. Standardized tests are linear in nature, and this friend was better at big picture thinking. She would read a passage, then look at the question, then look at the answers—some of which were just plain dumb. From a big picture standpoint some of those answers were just too dumb for words, and this can be a powerful distraction for global thinkers. Imagine that you have staked your whole future on this one test. When you start seeing dumb things on the test, the big picture begins to look a little scary. How can college entrance be based on a test with dumb answers? Think like this long enough and you start getting anxious, which only makes it worse. When we read we use the global sense of sight to gather linear information, then we convert that information to global images and sounds and feelings. Standardized tests ask us to bring that information back to a linear format, which seems wrong to many people.

What else does it mean to understand? Sometimes it means to speak or write about what we understand. This often happens in work settings, where we have to read material and then write a report or give a presentation. Many teachers give essay tests or require presentations. Like standardized tests, essays and presentations have their own plusses and minuses. The most important downside to essay tests and presentations is subtle. There is a huge difference between understanding something, and expressing yourself well in writing or speaking well on your feet. Many people do well in school, not because they understand so well, but because they are better than others on their feet or they write exceedingly well.

So far we have described three kinds of understanding: "follows my words without confusion", "scores well on multiple choice tests", and "speak or writes about the material well". Many educators overlook a fourth, vital, kind of understanding, emotional involvement. Enjoying material, getting angry about material, having any emotion about the material is an important form of understanding. Emotional response may be the most important way to understand your leisure reading. Even your work reading can have emotional impact. Some teachers believe that if you understand with emotional response it will help with other kinds of understanding. Chuckles and tears are often better measures of understanding than essays, presentations, and multiple-choice tests. At all times you should read for the kind of understanding that suits your mood and

your needs.

Fighting subvocalization, fighting regression, doing away with hand pacing, and learning to read in meaningful groups of words are the four things accomplished by The Drills. Ideas like The Mountain Lake, Five Brain Theory, and Frames of Reference help explain how The Drills accomplish the goals established in The Rationale. But if it is as easy as doing the drills and acquiring the skills, if it is all as simple as it seems here, then why isn't speed reading common knowledge and standard practice? How could the superstition of hand pacing survive so long? There are no easy answers, but the next chapter, The Obstacles, looks at a selection of things that interfere with learning to speed read.

Chapter 3

The Obstacles

Rapid reading methods have been available to the public for decades. Why isn't this simple skill taught in every school in the land? Why isn't it a normal part of every child's education? If these techniques can get us through the unpleasant reading more quickly, and can help us enjoy the pleasant reading more, then why doesn't everybody use them? This chapter explores the answers to these questions. This chapter looks at possible reasons speed reading hasn't caught on in our mainstream educational system; it also looks at why people who spend money on expensive courses don't practice what they have learned. This chapter will also cover how even the definition of reading can be an obstacle to speed reading for some people.

3.1 The Hype

A friend told about his disappointment with a speed reading class. He is a successful man with a business degree from a good school. This man's father used to tell him, "If something looks too good to be true, it probably is", and this warning seemed a perfect fit for this friend's experience with speed reading. Speed reading often seems "too good to be true".

Most people take speed reading courses so they can read less, not more. They also take speed reading courses because of incredible claims made by speed reading companies. Speed reading is a skill. Like any other skill, it has to be learned. It has to be practiced. This means you must spend time reading. Many people would never spend the time, or waste their money,

on speed reading classes if they knew these requirements.

There are two bogus claims common in the speed reading business. They are:

We'll double your speed in one free session

and

After taking our course you will be reading thousands of words per minute

The first claim appeals to customers who are looking for a quick fix, who believe they can get something for nothing. The second claim hooks people willing to believe in nearly super-human powers. Perhaps neither is fraudulent in a legal sense, but both claims set up the student for disappointment.

3.1.1 Doubling Your Speed

Let's look first at the claim of doubled speed in one free session. If you can get someone to relax while they read, and get them to concentrate so they stop regressing, you will double their speed. This holds true for a huge percentage of the reading populace, and it is simple to accomplish. You need only explain that most readers don't concentrate well. Next instruct and encourage the customer to focus, to concentrate (which should be standard instruction in all schools.)

Here's how it works "in the biz." The prospective customer attends a workshop that promises to double the customer's reading speed. Early in the workshop, before the customer settles in, the salesman leading the session "tests" the customer's speed and comprehension. It is no surprise when scores are low on this first test. The customer is told that this first test is a baseline for future reference. Baseline is an impressive sounding term from psychology that is supposed to refer to an average performance before an experiment begins. This first reading test is nothing like a baseline, instead it reflects the customer's worst case performance. This first reading is rigged to score well below the customer's true average. Later, after some ice-breaking exercises and a chance to settle in, the workshop leader talks about regression and teaches hand pacing as a way

to break the regression habit.¹ After a little practice the customers take a second test. This time the customer is more relaxed, and uses their hand to prevent regression. Focused, relaxed reading will be faster and better than tense and awkward reading. The customer's scores seem to double, but what are we really comparing? Aren't we comparing tense and distracted performance with focused, relaxed performance? After comparing the customer's worst to their best, the salesman leading the session takes credit for the so-called improvement, and then promises still more improvements if the customer pays for the entire course. The illusion of improvement is created by comparing the customer's worst with their best, and this illusion sells a lot of courses.

There is another aspect to consider. Hand movements recreate a phenomenon from hypnosis called "automatic movement". While in the mild hypnosis state that goes with automatic movement, the customers do indeed focus better, concentrate better, and score better. This lets them score at the top of their normal abilities. The true baseline is somewhere between the first test and the second. The salesman leading the session claims the first score is a baseline and the second score is evidence of new powers granted by the salesman's instructions. In reality the only new skill learned is the hypnotic phenomenon of automatic movement. Many people pay for an entire course based on this illusion of improvement. The rest of the course is essentially a series of encouragement and practice sessions. Instead of moving the hand back and forth, customers practice moving their hand in "U" shapes, "Z" shapes, and up and down instead of back and forth. What each of these hand pacing systems boils down to is reading while displaying hypnotic phenomena, and practicing on faith until it works. For many people, the irrelevant hand motions, and the need to practice, is too great a burden, so they never learn speed reading. Since none of the natural speed readers who were studied use hand pacing, this system eliminates it. Hypnosis may have its place, but automatic movement is no part of natural speed reading.

¹To give the devil its due, hand pacing does help fight regression. But if you've done the drills you already know how unnecessary hand pacing is.

3.1.2 Read thousands of words per minute, or a Page-at-a-Glance

“Read 25,000 words per minute” is the second bogus claim in the speed reading business. This claim is the worst kind of bait-and-switch. The hopeful reader sees an ad or comes to a free “workshop” and is told that looking at a page is the same as reading a page. The salesman leading the session says skimming is “reading” and reading is “accessing the unconscious”, but most customers can’t quite read between the lines to understand what is really being said.

Here’s the fast talk behind this scam. Since vision is global, seeing a page for even a second means you see each and every word on the page. There’s the bait. In theory if you have seen the words, then they are stored somewhere in your sub-conscious mind. This might even be true, but what good does it do? Here comes the switch. The customer is told skimming again at a slightly slower speed will get what has been skimmed out of the unconscious mind and into the conscious mind where we can use it. If this still isn’t good enough, then re-skim even more slowly. After three or four skims, each a little slower, you can go line-by-line over anything you still don’t understand; but going line-by-line is not called reading, it is “accessing your subconscious”.

“Skim fast, then a bit slower and then slower still” is a very useful strategy, and this book teaches it. But skimming is not reading. The 25,000 words per minute scam artists are telling the plain truth—if you accept their labels whereby skimming is reading and reading is accessing your subconscious. These labels can make the difference between spending or not spending hundreds of dollars on a class that teaches skimming under a different label. In this instance the semantics of the issue are more important than you might think.

3.1.3 Why Bother with Hype?

Why does anyone use these scams? The obvious reason is for simple profit. Remember pet rocks? There is nothing legally wrong with persuading you to pay for something you can obtain on your own for free. Sales people use fantastic claims to generate curiosity. Many people assume there must be some element of truth in even the most outrageous claims. Many sales people feel justified making stupendous claims if this

curiosity motivates a potential customer to check out the product. As a result, many people pay hundreds of dollars on classes that do them more harm than good. Too many people have said to me, "Sure, I took a speed reading course, but I don't use it." These people don't mention the hype that got them in the door, or the disappointment when they discovered that the hype was too good to be true.

Getting the customer in the door is the first reason for exaggerated claims. Once in the door, once money changes hands, there is a second reason to use wild claims and deception. Assume we're talking about a teacher who genuinely wants to give good value to the student. Such a teacher knows that the student is probably sold on hype. The honest teacher knows that skill comes only with practice and patience and discipline, which is the opposite of the quick fix "something-for-nothing" appeal of the sales presentation. To motivate the student to practice, some teachers will give the illusion of miraculous initial progress. The testing methods described earlier, in which a worst case score is falsely identified as a baseline, accomplish this trick. The student gets a thrill of initial success. This thrill translates, at least for a while, into motivation. This is a "the ends justified the means" kind of rationalization, but the goal that might justify the deception is rarely achieved. Most people never see through the bogus tests or phony re-labeling, and so end up thinking they improved some because of their studies. These are the people who say, "Speed reading? I know how; I just don't like it".

Make no mistake, the drills in this book require practice and patience and discipline. If you do the drills as described, you will experience different levels of success on different days. It takes some discipline to do the drills on days when they don't offer up an immediate reward. The drills maximize the plus days and minimize the minus days by having you go from slow to fast and back to slow. This gives you a taste of improvement almost every day as you return to that day's "slower speeds."

There is really nothing mysterious about speed reading techniques. They take a little time to learn, and it takes some practice to make them work well. Sadly, the reason most people take a speed reading course is so they can devote less time to reading. Natural speed readers are just the opposite. By definition, "naturals" develop their skills without ever taking a speed reading class. Naturals learn speed reading on their own from a love of the printed word. Naturals learn speed reading by spending countless hours reading just for fun. The natural speed reader is a

reader, period. Too many people who come for speed reading courses are literate non-readers. They can read, but view reading like a toilet plunger, an unpleasant tool that they hope not to need. Natural speed readers view reading as a friend, as a treasure.

3.1.4 Don't like reading

Speed reading means more reading, not less. If you don't like reading, how are you going to enjoy speed reading? Natural speed readers read for fun. They gain speed without ever taking a class or doing a drill. People who don't like to read aren't likely to care for the drills. Even after increasing their speed they might turn their backs on the method because they would rather just avoid reading all together.

What makes reading fun? Start with that one vital question. When you answer it you will have made the most important change you can make as far as your reading skills are concerned. For too many people reading just isn't fun. For these people reading is just something they have to do when they can't get out of it. Many people say that reading was something they were forced to do after a certain age. They say the alphabet was something they learned in school. They say reading wasn't play; reading was hard, boring, humiliating work. No wonder most people don't find reading fun. It's like the difference between hanging out with your best friends or being stuck with the vice-principal on detention. In contrast, some folks don't remember any time in their life when reading wasn't something cool, something that they wanted to do more and do better. Words and letters and books and reading always felt like friends to me. Before they can talk their parents read to them. Perhaps when they were babies their parents gave them a mobile made of the letters of the alphabet, or sang the alphabet song to them in their crib. With experiences like these it is easy to understand how some folks grow up enjoying reading.

Natural speed readers read for fun. They love reading, and they love talking about what they read. They read fiction and biography and technical non-fiction and whatever else interests them. They usually have one style of writing they prefer, but they also sample almost every style and type of writing. This is an important characteristic shared by natural speed readers. It seems worthwhile to develop this characteristic if you want to speed read, but how do you do it? That brings us back to the question,

“What makes reading fun?” There are lots of answers, and some are listed in Chapter Five, The Rewards. If you don’t have your own answer to the question, why not jump ahead to The Rewards?

3.2 The Fix

The cure for the “don’t like reading” obstacle is to discover what kinds of reading you might enjoy. What interests you? What interests you? Who are the celebrities you like best? Who are your heroes? Your local bookstore probably has a dozen books on topics that interest you. Or try the library, with its superior selection and anti-fad sensibility. Taking a little extra time to find things you enjoy reading will pay off in the long run. Do the drills and you will learn to speed read. If you get your speed up to about 750 words per minute—a conservative goal—you can read a fair sized novel in about the same time it would take to watch a film version of the novel. Since there is much more to most books than in their corresponding movies, you will be getting more benefit for the same time investment. Make it FUN!

Find something you want to read, and use that for your drills. From biographies of sports figures to travel books to murder mystery, find a book that is interesting and fairly easy for you. Don’t do the drills with something complex, and for goodness sake don’t work with anything boring or difficult. Pick a book that you always wanted to read, not one you think you “should” read. Pick a book for pure fun. This will make it easier for you to take ten minutes a day for the drills. That ten minutes can be a double reward for you. The first reward is enjoying what you read. The second reward is learning to read faster and understand more. Do yourself a favor, make it fun. Natural speed readers enjoy reading because they read what they enjoy. If you are going to put in the effort to learn to speed read, why not entice yourself with some rewards?

Your reasons for reading make a big difference in how you read. Too much of the reading in school is boring, and it’s rarely much fun to read and summarize a report for your boss. This was true before you ever heard of speed reading. If you have ever picked up a book that interested you and read through it because you enjoyed it, then you know how different pleasure reading is from assigned reading. Learning this difference is one of the most important steps in improving reading speed. Doing the drills

with a “pure fun” book is important.

3.2.1 Losing an Old Excuse

Sometimes we want an easy way out of doing unpleasant things. Bluntly put, being a slow reader gives you a ready made excuse. Reading fast and understanding well takes away that excuse. If you are a slow reader, you don't have to worry about getting certain kinds of assignments. On the other hand, when people learn you read 800 words per minute, they may assume they have the right to pass reading assignments to you. Instead of reading less, you could end up reading more than ever before. This is a very real obstacle, however unflattering it may be. If being a slow reader gets you out of things, you may have to learn to politely say, “No.” Balancing your needs with what others expect of you is a big issue.

How can you cope with unwanted assigned reading? The answer depends on what is expected of you after you read it. If you are expected to take a no-notes essay test on the material you will use one approach. If you are expected to give a quick summary in a meeting later that day, you will take another approach. Either way, you will be able to get more information from the material in less time if you have practiced the drills. As explained in *The Rationale*, most writing is quite repetitive. Many of the words required for proper written grammar have nothing to do with the data. If you are reading for a data-only mission, then reading by phrases or clauses will make a huge difference for you. You might even do well to start with skimming and scanning as described in Chapter Four. It is up to you to choose the best to approach for the material at hand.

3.2.2 Deviance

Normal readers read about 200 words per minute. This means speed reading is abnormal, which is a very real obstacle for some people. Some people are afraid of being abnormal. Normal doesn't mean good, and it doesn't mean bad. Normal just means, “What most people do.” Normal is a statement about numbers, not quality. It isn't normal to read at all; think of the generations throughout history who couldn't read at all. The desire to be normal can get in the way of speed reading. Self image prevents people from doing things that are good for them. Learning any

new skill brings a change in self image or self concept. With a new skill as unusual as speed reading it is doubly important to take this change in self image into account. Once you learn speed reading you will realize the people around you could also learn speed reading. This can lead you to be less sympathetic when others complain about their reading burdens. Along with a loss of sympathy can come the feeling that people resent you for your new ability. You can even come to doubt yourself, your abilities, and the feelings that come from using them. Learning speed reading must fit your self image and self concept. If it doesn't you might end up ignoring your new found skill, even after proving to yourself that the methods work. If your self image can't adjust you might neglect your speed reading skills because the cost, in terms of relationships and self concept, is too high.

Self Actualization

Self Actualized is a term from psychology. The term was developed to describe people who were healthy and happy and successful, without getting too picky about what success means in terms of money or power. The idea of the self actualized person grew from the research of Abraham Maslow. Maslow pointed out that a person can't really worry about issues such as art and social graces if they can't take care of their basic needs. Maslow offered a list of needs and described how these needs are usually prioritized. First come physical needs like air, food, water, shelter. Next comes structure, in the form of work and social order. Third is belonging, being part of a group. Fourth on the list is self-respect and esteem, success. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was offered as a rough guideline and explains why it is important to take care of our needs in proper order.

If you take the people who have filled all the needs in Maslow's hierarchy, you will find some are happier and more successful than others. Maslow calls these people "self-actualized". Self-actualization is being the best you can be, regardless of where you stand with the competition. If you are beating the competition, but only putting half your energy into the task, then you aren't really being the best you can be. If you are in the middle of the pack with your competitors, but really putting in 100% effort, then self actualized is a good description. Self actualization has more to do with your own talents and abilities and less to do with the performance of other people.

Part of being self actualized is valuing your opinions at least as much as the opinions of teachers and doctors and friends and family. Self-actualized people put more stock in their own thoughts and feelings and experiences than those of the people around them. Self-actualized people can be a little off beat or out of step with “normal” people. There are many things that “normal” people care about and do that of little concern to self-actualized people. The self-actualized person does their own thing whenever possible, while continuing to be self supporting and self reliant. The self-actualized person is the opposite of the starving artist. Instead of saying “art is suffering,” the self-actualized person finds a way to keep a roof over their head and take plenty of time for the things they love.

Speed reading is a self actualization skill. You won’t worry too much about speed reading if you aren’t paying your rent or keeping food on the table. Reading better could increase your earning ability, but that won’t matter. You will probably won’t do the drills, which means you won’t develop the skills, until your basic needs are met. This includes your social needs. Speed reading can mean turning away from the opinions and values of people around you. It can mean doing things based on your own values and opinions and experience. Most people will choose keeping stable relationships over a gaining a skill that would require changing those relationships. We do many things to keep other people happy, even if we don’t like to admit it. We do things to keep an even keel with the boss, our co-workers, our family. Expectations of the people around you will influence everything you do. These influences aren’t always in your best interest. Whenever you seek to improve yourself you will need to take into account how it will affect your relationships.

Bookworm Syndrome

For many people being called “bookworm” is right up there with “sissy,” “weakling,” and “cry-baby.” This is a problem for speed reading, because “speed reader” seems painfully close to “bookworm.”

Maybe you are thinking, “Not me; I’m an adult. I wouldn’t let something like that get in my way.” Guess again. Most of your self concept and self image were built during childhood. If you decided, or were convinced, that reading is for sissies, then you are going have to decide differently if you want to speed read. You will learn the method just fine, but you won’t use it until you convince yourself that reading isn’t just for

sissies and bookworms. If you made fun of bookworms as a child, speed reading may be uncomfortable for you at first. Speed reading doesn't make you a bookworm; it just makes you a reader. You can live a well-rounded life that just happens to include speed reading. Still, speed reading can involve doing some bookwormish things. You will have to ask yourself if the benefits, such as less time on required reading and more pleasure from leisure reading, are worth the risk.

Lost in the Library

It is important to drill using material that interests you. Your local library is a great place to find a good book. If you do little pleasure reading you will need to learn about selecting books you like. It is very frustrating to get a book home and discover you hate it.

If you already knew what was in a given book you wouldn't need to read it. Information on the cover of a book can be completely misleading. Your best guides for picking a book are the table of contents, the index, and the book itself. Read a couple of paragraphs at random on two or three pages, just to get a sample of the author's style. If the book passes that test, look at the table of contents and index. If the sample paragraphs, table of contents, and index all look good, then you may have a winner. For fiction the random sample is even more important, because the table of contents won't be very descriptive and there isn't likely to be an index. With fiction this sample paragraph makes or breaks your choice.

Even with this sampling method you can be disappointed. Since there is always this risk, the library might be the best place for starting your search for a good book. This way your mistakes won't cost you anything. More importantly, a library will have a bigger and better selection of books from which to choose. True, you won't have all the latest best-sellers, but last month's best-seller is just as enjoyable today as it was last month. Many books are in limbo. These books had their turn on the best seller lists, and currently await their promotion to the classics section. Such books line the library shelves; looking through them can bring great rewards. "Lost in the Library" is an obstacle that is worth overcoming. Few activities bring such rich rewards for so little investment as visiting your library.

Snobs in the bookstore

Another reading obstacle is the feeling of snobbishness found in some bookstores. Some chains are snooty, but some are staffed by tremendous people eager to help you find the perfect book. Neighborhood stores can be friendly or completely pompous. Sometimes a store's staff members are great, but the store's customers are so pretentious they make your skin crawl. This obstacle goes straight to the issues of self image and self concept. Who wants to speed read if it means dealing with stuck up jerks? Too many so-called intellectuals give this rather negative impression. There is nothing about reading that makes one snobbish. On the contrary, readers can be the friendliest and most accepting people you could hope to meet. Readers tend to be curious about life and about people, that's why they read. This leads readers to ask questions, because they really want to know what is going on.

If the bookstores you visit seem snobbish, check out the competition. Chances are you can find a store where the customers and staff make you feel so comfortable that you to enjoy spending time selecting books or magazines to read. This goes a long way towards overcoming the obstacle of dealing with snobs.

Concluding Deviance

Because of self image issues and self actualization issues, there is more at stake here than just your words per minute. Speed reading will affect your work and your home. Knowing ahead of time about the effects of speed reading lets you prepare for them. Not knowing about these effects can make you turn your back on a priceless skill.

3.2.3 Process Conflicts with Content

Sometimes it is hard to concentrate on what you are reading because of all the new stuff you are doing. Instead of paying attention to what you are reading, you worry about how you are reading. The drills minimize this problem, but it can't be entirely eliminated. This problem kept me from learning to speed read for more than a decade, even though I read a dozen books on the subject. Using my hand to pace my eyes distracted me too much. I did hand drills for weeks at a time, and never got anywhere.

I could never get involved with the meaning of the words while waving my hand over them. I was too distracted by trying to follow my hand. I was too self-conscious about looking like I had a nerve disorder. I was too uncomfortable trying to read while moving so much.

“No Hands” speed reading still isn’t what most people would call “normal,” but the technique is unobtrusive. Counting while you are trying to read seems awkward at first; it takes a little while to get used to. The drills start off with slow speeds precisely so you can get comfortable with counting and seeing words at the same time. The drills help make sure you are confident of your ability to understand what you read. Before you know it, the how part of speed reading will be in the back of your mind and won’t bother you at all.

Different reading styles for different styles of writing

As mentioned elsewhere, faster isn’t always better. Different types of writing should be read differently, which is one reason the drills make you practice reading slowly. You must know how to adjust your speed to suit your needs. Choosing your speed will be based on two factors. First is the difficulty of the material at hand, which is a relative element. If the material is a topic you know well, it will be easier for you to read. The second factor in choosing your reading speed is what you want to get from the material. If you need to prepare a summary for a meeting the next day, you might want to preview, scan, and skim instead of reading. If you just want to spend a pleasant evening curled up with a book, then slow down to whatever speed and meaning group is comfortable. The following subsections explore in more detail some of the reasons you might want to adjust your reading speed.

Verbal art

Haiku is a form of poetry, usually three short lines; you don’t read haiku at 800 words per minute. On the contrary, good haiku makes you slow down and look for deeper meanings. The conflict of verbal art versus speed is just as obvious in much fiction. Some stories have very little plot, but are woven together with beautiful sounding words. These stories might even be at their best when read out loud. Other stories are all about plot and character. Reading these at high speed gets straight to the heart of seeing

the action and feeling the feelings brought up by the characters and their interaction. With the first type of book, reading too fast can get in the way of enjoying it. In the second type of book speed reading is what gets you the most entertainment. If you only read one way you will probably give up on speed reading, because too many things just shouldn't be read at top speed. This isn't limited to fiction. Some non-fiction books are written so well that it is a treat to settle in and ramble around in the individual words. To do that you have to give yourself permission to read as fast or as slow as suits you.

One reason the drills go from slow to fast to slow again is to give you experience with changing speeds. You already know what it feels like to slow down and speed up as suits you. When you are really enjoying an author's style, or a certain turn of phrase, slow down and savor it. One of the beauties of the system in this book is learning that you have more time to "stop and smell the roses" when you read. You can speed through the "parking lots and sidewalks" of most writing styles, but when you find gems worth stopping for, you will have more time to enjoy them.

Number of "stoppers" per page

Gems of prose aren't the only things that can bring you to a grinding stop in the middle of reading. Stoppers can be as annoying as speed bumps on a freeway, but there is another point of view. Most stoppers are opportunities to do something good for yourself. Most stoppers help you expand your overall knowledge, and that can only be good for you.

Vocabulary and Your Personal Database

Another reason for changing your reading speed has to do with your current vocabulary and knowledge base. If you love the wild west, and have read a dozen novels and seen countless movies about the wild west, then you will probably be able to read books of this type faster than other genres. You will already have a set of pictures and concepts for everything from different types of horses to different types of guns, from different types of terrain to different types of buildings. Someone who has never seen a western movie and has never read one of these books will work much harder to make sense of their reading because they have a different knowledge base. If you are reading something you already know about

you will be able to take in larger meaning groups and you will have fewer stoppers per page than a person who doesn't know the subject.

In a more general way, the bigger your vocabulary, the fewer times you will have to stop to re-read a new word. Even if you don't look up words, just taking the time to guess about them, to decide whether or not they are worth looking up, can be a huge time gobble. The more words you know, the less often this will happen. There is also a relationship between vocabulary and knowledge base; a wide vocabulary will take you into many different knowledge bases. It is also true that the better your vocabulary, the better equipped you are to guess at word meanings. You will get better at figuring out word meanings from their root words. You will get better at deciding quickly whether or not you need to look up a particular word, or if the context provides enough meaning.

New words, new ideas, new settings are all things that can force you to slow down if you are trying to understand what you are reading. The good news is that the more you read the better your vocabulary and knowledge base become.

When you think about it, all the obstacles in this chapter can signal a chance at self improvement. Being less susceptible to hype is certainly good for you, as is understanding the dynamics of self-actualization, or building your vocabulary or knowledge base. Following through on these issues makes speed reading much more valuable than a simple increase in words per minute.

Chapter 4

Other Stuff

This chapter is about things that can help your reading, and things that you can do instead of, or before, reading, depending on the material and what you need to do with it.

4.1 Dictionary, Thesaurus, and Vocabulary

One of the best things you can do for your reading speed is increase your knowledge base. The more you know the easier it is to make sense of what you read. If you keep a dictionary nearby then it is easy to look up new words. A thesaurus is just as good and sometimes better for a quick grasp of what a word means. There are also many books on the market designed to help you increase your vocabulary.

You don't always have to look a word up to know what it means. If you read a sentence such as

There were shards of glass everywhere after Jimmy frapped the window

you will probably figure out that "frapped" is something you can do to a window to make shards of glass, so frapped has to be similar to hit or broke or shot or zapped. You might not feel comfortable using the word in conversation, but you will be able to understand the sentence and continue because the context of the sentence tells you more or less what the word must mean. Context can tell you what a word must mean in a given sentence. This is true for all words, in every sentence, but we normally don't

think about it. Without context we can't know what a word or sentence means. A person's knowledge base is part of this context. Knowledge base will control the exact meanings that different readers get out of the same sets of words. When you read a word you don't know, your brain goes into overdrive to find words that could be substituted into the sentence and still make sense. If enough substitutes have similar meanings then your brain can signal you to keep reading, on the assumption that the word is similar to the substitutes. You might not even notice that you skipped a word. If too many substitute words are available, or too few, your brain will signal you to stop and think for a moment. Then you will evaluate where the word fits in the sentence, where the sentence fits in the paragraph, and so on, until you decide either to look up the word or to continue. Context helps you make the decision.

4.2 Instead of Reading

Sometimes you won't need to read a book or article at all, because you can get what you need from one or more of the three methods that follow. When that works, great. Just don't confuse these methods with reading.

Some so-called speed reading courses focus exclusively on previewing, scanning, and skimming. The people teaching those courses know that skimming isn't reading. To support this point, look at the following quotation from Dr. Stanley D. Frank.¹ Dr. Frank was Executive Vice-President of Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. when he wrote:

I recall a confession of sorts by one of the fastest readers I know, Dan Warner, one of our Evelyn Wood teachers. Dan can read many thousands of words a minute, and has frequently demonstrated his skill before audiences in public lectures and on television.

But he has also found a place for subvocal linear reading. For example, he loved reading the Dune series of fantasy-science-fiction books by novelist Frank Herbert. With these and other absorbing novels, he'll frequently slow down to about 800-900

¹"Remember Everything You Read, The Evelyn Wood 7 Day Speed Reading and Learning Program," Stanley D. Frank, Ed.D., Executive Vice-President of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1990 by American Learning Corporation

words per minute in the last chapter or so to relish the final climax and disposition of the plot—and there’s absolutely nothing wrong with that.

This sort of indulgence is perfectly acceptable for a student or anyone else, and will probably enhance one’s understanding and enjoyment of many books.

The methods taught in Dr. Frank’s system are previewing, scanning, and skimming. Previewing, scanning, and skimming are not reading. They can be great time savers for getting the gist of a book or article, and often they can give much more information than you need for a given task or assignment. Previewing, scanning, and skimming can not give the full impact of the writing. Previewing, scanning, and skimming can not give the full details of action. Previewing, scanning, and skimming can not convey the depth of feeling or understanding that reading can bring. You should learn and use these methods. Use them often or sparingly, based on your own needs. Just remember that they are a sorry substitute for meaningful reading.

4.2.1 Previewing

You can’t judge a book by its cover, true, but the cover of a book can give a lot of great information to help you get more out of the book. The same goes for the table of contents, index, glossary, footnotes, and diagrams. These materials supplement a book, and previewing them can aid your understanding of the contents and structure of any book. In addition, you may want to turn every page in the book once before settling in to read it. This protects the spine of the book, and thereby protects your investment in the book. “Breaking in” a book this way also makes the pages easier to turn later, so you spend less time on page turning and more on the text. Glance at each page as you break in a book, and take an extra moment for each diagram and illustration. You will also notice chapter headings, and any material that is formatted for special notice. When you break in your book, you will get an idea of how much dialogue there is, how much straight text, how long the average paragraphs are, and even the general tone of the author’s writing. You can also pick up the basic organization of a book when you break it in and preview it.

Whenever you start a book, you have a choice to make. Doing things a little bit backwards can help increase your understanding of what you read. Read over the index and the glossary, if the book has either. Read the table of contents carefully, and look at each of the diagrams. Read the blurbs on the back of the book, and the sleeve of the dust cover, if there is one. All of this provides context for your reading. Having this context makes a big difference in understanding what you read.

Should all material be previewed? Remember to ask why you are reading, what you want from your reading. If suspense or surprise are your goal, then previewing is a no-no. Who wants to read a whodunnit when previewing reveals the murderer's identity? But if your objective is to speed up your learning and your understanding of the writing, then previewing is a great way to start.

4.2.2 Scanning

We defined previewing as breaking in the book and looking at all the support materials that come with it, such as the table of contents, the index, the dust cover. In addition to breaking in a book, you can spend two or three seconds looking at each page. Many systems base their methods on this kind of scanning. Many people learn to scan so well that they can get all the information they need that way. If your goal is to give a report on what you have read, or to simply recognize the main points, then scanning is a marvelous tool. As with previewing, there will be times when scanning doesn't fit your wants or needs. At those times, don't scan. Natural speed readers are very comfortable scanning through different parts of books, and then slowing down when things get a little more interesting. Scanning is a tool that you can use to make your reading more enjoyable and efficient.

Most systems emphasize different ways to scan a page, but you should experiment and find what works best for you. Straight line scanning has your eyes going smoothly down the center of a page without looking right or left. This is a good thing to practice, and as you do you will find you see larger meaning groups, and your understanding of what you have scanned will increase.

Another commonly taught scanning pattern is to swing your eyes in a "U" shape over a page. Starting in the top left corner of the page, let

your eyes flow down the left side of the page almost to the bottom, then let them swing over to the right side of the page, and then let them flow up the right side of the page to the top right corner. The shape you have just followed is like the letter "U".

There is also an "S" pattern popular with many scanning instructors. In this pattern you start at the upper *right* corner and use your eyes to trace a giant "S" on the page, ending up in the lower left hand corner. Other instructors prefer a "Z" pattern, starting in the upper *left* and using their eyes to trace a giant letter "Z" ending in the lower right.

All the scanning patterns mentioned so far assume you will use the pattern once on an entire page. Most courses and systems that teach these patterns assume that you will use your hand to trace the patterns on the page. You already know that you can use your eyes without using your hand to guide them, so feel free to use these scanning patterns without your hand. Scanning doesn't deliver the subtleties of feeling and image that meaningful reading does, but it can pack a lot of data into a short time.

Besides page-at-a-time scanning patterns, mentioned above, many systems shrink the patterns so they can be used several times on a page. The two most common patterns are the "S" pattern and the "Z" pattern. Instead of tracing one giant "Z" on a page, you can trace one "Z" on the top half and a second on the bottom half. Instead of two, you can have three or four or however many you want. If you think about it, the "Z" pattern is what you have always used on your normal reading. The first "Z" starts in the upper left of the page, with the first letter of the first word, and ends on the last letter of the last word of the second line. The second "Z" starts with the first letter of the first word of the third line, and so on down the rest of the page.

Scanning is important, which is why you have been provided with the schedule in the table below. You can also come up with your own plan of scanning practice. The schedule provided uses the same speeds as the reading drills, but instead of different word groups, you will use different scanning patterns. The speed is the time you take to trace a pattern, no matter how many times you use that pattern on a page. Day one starts with four seconds per page, for four "S" patterns, at Slow. Day fifteen starts with two "Z" patterns per page at Slow. The high speed on day fifteen is one "Z" pattern at Slow. The highest speed, day eighteen, is a "U" pattern skim at Normal; this is equivalent to about 46,000 words per

minute, except that scanning is not reading. Here are the first day's drills:

At Very Slow speed do four "S" shaped scans per page for one minute

At Slow speed do four "S" shaped scans per page for one minute

At Normal speed do four "S" shaped scans per page for one minute

At Fast speed do four "S" shaped scans per page for one minute

At Very Slow speed do three "S" shaped scans per page for one minute

At Fast speed do four "S" shaped scans per page for one minute

At Normal speed do four "S" shaped scans per page for one minute

At Slow speed do four "S" shaped scans per page for one minute

At Very Slow speed do four "S" shaped scans per page for one minute

This format should be familiar by now, as it is the same format used for the actual reading drills. Here is the full listing of scanning drills for an 18 day course:

Day One: VS,Sx4; S,Sx4; N,Sx4; F,Sx4; VS,Sx3; F,Sx4; N,Sx4; S,Sx4; VS,Sx4

Day Two: N"S"x4, F"S"x4, V"S"x4, S"S"x3, N"S"x3, S"S"x3, V"S"x4, F"S"x4, N"S"x4

Day Three: S"Z"x4, N"Z"x4, F"Z"x4, V"Z"x4, S"Z"x3, V"Z"x4, F"Z"x4, N"Z"x4, S"Z"x4

Day Four: N"Z"x4, F"Z"x4, V"Z"x4, S"Z"x3, N"Z"x3, S"Z"x3, V"Z"x4, F"Z"x4, N"Z"x4

Day Five: S"U"x4, N"U"x4, F"U"x4, V"U"x4, S"U"x3, V"U"x4, F"U"x4, N"U"x4, S"U"x4

Day Six: N"U"x4, F"U"x4, V"U"x4, S"U"x3, N"U"x3, S"U"x3, V"U"x4, F"U"x4, N"U"x4

Day Seven: S"S"x3, N"S"x3, F"S"x3, V"S"x3, S"S"x2, V"S"x3, F"S"x3, N"S"x3, S"S"x3

Day Eight: N"S"x3, F"S"x3, V"S"x3, S"S"x2, N"S"x2, S"S"x2, V"S"x3, F"S"x3, N"S"x3

Day Nine: S"Z"x3, N"Z"x3, F"Z"x3, V"Z"x3, S"Z"x2, V"Z"x3,

F"Z"x3, N"Z"x3, S"Z"x3
 Day Ten: N"Z"x3, F"Z"x3, V"Z"x3, S"Z"x2, N"Z"x2, S"Z"x2,
 V"Z"x3, F"Z"x3, N"Z"x3
 Day Eleven: S"U"x3, N"U"x3, F"U"x3, V"U"x3, S"U"x2, V"U"x3,
 F"U"x3, N"U"x3, S"U"x3
 Day Twelve: N"U"x3, F"U"x3, V"U"x3, S"U"x2, N"U"x2, S"U"x2,
 V"U"x3, F"U"x3, N"U"x3
 Day Thirteen: S"S"x2, N"S"x2, F"S"x2, V"S"x2, S"S"x1, V"S"x2,
 F"S"x2, N"S"x2, S"S"x2
 Day Fourteen: N"S"x2, F"S"x2, V"S"x2, S"S"x1, N"S"x1, S"S"x1,
 V"S"x2, F"S"x2, N"S"x2
 Day Fifteen: S"Z"x2, N"Z"x2, F"Z"x2, V"Z"x2, S"Z"x1, V"Z"x2,
 F"Z"x2, N"Z"x2, S"Z"x2
 Day Sixteen: N"Z"x2, F"Z"x2, V"Z"x2, S"Z"x1, N"Z"x1, S"Z"x1,
 V"Z"x2, F"Z"x2, N"Z"x2
 Day Seventeen: S"U"x2, N"U"x2, F"U"x2, V"U"x2, S"U"x1,
 V"U"x2, F"U"x2, N"U"x2, S"U"x2
 Day Eighteen: N"U"x2, F"U"x2, V"U"x2, S"U"x1, N"U"x1,
 S"U"x1, V"U"x2, F"U"x2, N"U"x2

How does scanning work? You can see words on several lines, but you have a lifetime's habit of ignoring what you don't look at directly. The biggest reason for this habit is that we are trained to ignore our peripheral vision. The eye has two kinds of light receptors, rods and cones. Rods are pretty much all over the retina. They can detect weak sources of light, and are very sensitive to movement. Cones are found pretty much only in the area of the retina called the fovea. Cones let us see color, and cones get most of our attention. We focus with cones; rods see things we aren't looking at directly. We can learn to use the information rods send us as well as the information from the cones. In theory there is no limit to how much of a page you can see in peripheral vision. One system rests their whole operation on the claim that if you have seen a page, even if only for a second, then all the words are placed in your unconscious by peripheral vision. That system claims you can "tap into your unconscious" to understand what you took in this way. It is a plausible idea. Unfortunately the methods for "tapping the unconscious" bear a suspicious resemblance to what most grade school students would call reading.

It is important to do the reading drills before practicing scanning. Scan-

ning is a good tool for many projects, and you will benefit from developing this skill. Remember that your goal is to get the most out of your reading with the least effort. For some tasks that means scanning. Adding this tool to your skill base can only benefit you, as long as you remember to preview, scan, skim, or read to suit yourself and your needs.

Other scanning and skimming methods include reading upside down and reading backwards. Reading upside down is an interesting skill to have. Doing the reading drills and the scanning drills upside down really drives home what it is like to get the meaning of a word from seeing it instead of from hearing it. The “Flash Card” exercise that follows also works well with upside down material.

4.2.3 Skimming

When you read, especially when you use the method taught in this book, you are evaluating all the words on the page for how they fit together to make meaning. When you skim, you combine scanning and reading selectively.

Skimming is about half way between scanning and reading. One good method of skimming is to read only the first and last sentences in each paragraph. This is a great way to get the flavor of a book or article, you will get more than you would from scanning; but you still aren’t reading. Some courses teach students to always start with previewing and breaking in their books, followed by scanning at a second or two per page, and next to decide what parts need skimming and what parts need to be read properly. This is a good method to follow for many types of reading, such as school work and business reports and even some fiction. Knowing how a story ends doesn’t mean you won’t enjoy the story. Think about the film, “The Wizard of Oz.” Each year millions of children are terrified by the Wicked Witch of the West, even though they’ve seen the film before and they know Dorothy escapes in the end. Previewing fiction can work the same way. Knowing where a story is going can often enhance the pleasure of reading it. This is true of songs and movies that we sing or see over and over. It is equally true with much fiction, so the preview-scan-skim-read strategy shouldn’t be ruled out for fiction. You will develop your own judgment for how to approach each reading situation. Remember that your goal is to have choices of how to read, and to choose based on your

needs. The best way to read will always be dictated by what you want from your reading, and how the material fits your abilities and experience.

4.2.4 Flash Cards

Flash cards are an incredible learning tool, and you can use them to help increase your reading speed. You won't have to buy them or make them; you can get the same effect using a book.

Open a book at a random page, look for a moment at the upper left hand corner of that page, then close the book. Write down as many of the words as you can remember, then re-open the book and compare what you wrote with what is on the page. It is important not to slip into reading; don't let your eyes move over the line or the page. The idea of the exercise is to pin your eyes to one spot and notice how much you can see without moving them. On your first try you might only get the word in the exact corner and the one beside it and the one below it. Do this again, only this time "flash" on the lower right hand corner of the page, close the book, write down what you saw, go back and check it. Using the same page you should be able to do at least five "flashes," top left, top right, bottom left, bottom right, and dead center.

Your goal in this exercise has two parts: accuracy and number of words. Accuracy is by far the more important of these goals. It is better to only write one word accurately than to guess incorrectly at a half dozen. This exercise will increase your ability to see quickly and recall precisely. When you are able to get one or two words perfect every time then you will want to try for a bigger group. Being accurate is your first goal. Larger numbers will come with practice.

This flashing drill replaces a machine called a "tachistoscope." A tachistoscope runs a spool of film, like a filmstrip projector from your school days. Instead of showing a frame at a time, the tachistoscope is set to show one line of writing at a time. The machine has controls that let it pace the reader at different speeds. The machine's constant speed is supposed to wipe out regression and encourage the student to see bigger and bigger groups of words.

The tachistoscope is like a set of training wheels without the bicycle. There are three main problems with tachistoscopes. First, there is very little that you can read on a tachistoscope; Random House isn't going to

publish on this medium any time soon. Newsweek and People magazines don't publish on tachistoscope film. Second, the machine can't take into account a reader's need to vary their pace, faster and slower, to suit the reading material at hand. It is assumed that reading more words per minute is the only goal. It is assumed you will set the machine for the fastest speed at which you can comprehend. Third, the tachistoscope does nothing to address the difference between meaning-based word groups and arbitrary groups of words. The student using a tachistoscope has to hope that the words flying by will eventually make sense. The idea of seeing larger meaning groups can only be attained through sheer luck. Contrast with the tachistoscope: the flashing exercise described here can be used on any reading material, and will run to your pace. Most important of all, the flashing exercise aims at meaning groups instead of individual words.

4.2.5 State of Mind

It is difficult to read while you worry about your bills and the grades your kids are getting in math. Compare this to reading while you are on vacation in a quiet place, in a comfortable chair, with good light and not a care in the world. Which environment is going to be better for reading? Your state of mind will have a direct effect on your reading performance. By "states" it is meant states of mind such as relaxed, tense, angry, worried, or comfortable. This is the key element in the "free demonstration" sessions that some systems use for selling their classes. They test you once while you are still unsettled from being in a strange room full of strange people. Later, after a pep talk, after getting you pumped up to concentrate, after getting you to feel comfortable with the setting, they test you again. Of course the second test is better, but what has changed? Not your reading skills, but your state of mind.

You don't need a teacher to change your state; you can do it yourself. When you find you have been regressing, stop reading for at least a couple of minutes. Close your eyes and ask yourself what you need to do before you are ready to concentrate on reading again. One nice thing about this system is that you will be more sensitive to when you regressing, so you will know when you need a break. Instead of being the enemy, regression becomes a faithful guard dog that lets you know when tiredness or

distractions sneak up on you.

Sometimes you will read for half an hour or more without needing a break. Other times you will need to stop and get your bearings every five minutes. The difficulty of the material, your interest in the material, the lighting, hunger, the noise level of the surrounding area, and many other things can affect how often you need a rest. You need to realize that reading works better when you are relaxed and alert at the same time. Too much of one or the other and your reading will suffer.

If you must read when the setting isn't ideal, there are some things you can do to help. First, start with a drill. Use a very slow speed and a meaning group size that is very easy for you. Do the drill just the way you did the drills when you first started the system. This will help you concentrate. You will be better off going a little slower for a bit and getting things right the first time. As you get focused you will find yourself automatically moving up to a more comfortable speed and a more natural meaning group size. If this doesn't do the trick you might want to try the method described below.

4.2.6 Mental Bookmarks

What can you do when you are having trouble reading? Start by asking yourself, "When was the last time I felt really clear headed, relaxed, on the ball?" Any example of a time when you felt good, when your mind was clear and working well is great. A hint: don't try to find an example of reading with this feeling; you probably won't be able to remember one right away. But it's pretty easy to think of doing a hobby or playing some sport or doing some other activity when you feel alert and alive and clear headed. A great example is any time when you were especially proud of your creative or mental powers. You can use any time you solved a problem, figured out some puzzle, or came up with a creative plan. Once you find an example of the kind of experience described above, take a few minutes to think about that experience.

If you can, do the following experiment in a place where you can concentrate, where you can take five or ten minutes by yourself. Later you will need less time and you will be able to do the exercise in the middle of a noisy office. That comes later; for now, start yourself off easy. Think of that time when your brain was working well, when you felt clear

and clean, alert, refreshed, focused, relaxed, on the ball. It doesn't matter what you call it; pick a description that feels comfortable for you. You are searching for a feeling that helps you read better, get more out of your reading, enjoy it more, understand it better. Whatever positive experience you select, start asking yourself some questions about it. Really take the time to answer each question. Don't answer the question out loud; instead, answer the question by re-experiencing the example, re-seeing, re-feeling, re-hearing what you saw and felt and heard at the time. There's no rush; just take each part of each question one at a time.

- What time of day did this experience happen?
- Is it a memory from an evening, a morning, an early afternoon?
- Was it bright out or dark?
- Who was with you, or were you alone?
- Was it noisy or quiet?
- Were you talking to someone, or yourself?
- How did your voice sound?
- Was it hot, cold, dry, humid, windy, still?
- Were you standing, sitting, walking?
- What else can you remember about the sights and smells and sounds and feelings of this experience?

Maybe thinking about these questions will bring to mind other times that were similar in feeling. Take some time to explore those similar experiences, and ask the same questions about those other experiences. Here are a few other questions to ask:

- What it would be like to feel right now the way you felt in the examples?
- If this feeling were going to happen right now, would it creep in slowly over a few minutes, or would it flash into you like flipping a switch?
- Would you see your present surroundings a little differently?
- Would your surroundings seem brighter or darker?
- Would they be more focused? Less focused?
- Would you sound different when you talked, either to others or to yourself?
- Would your surroundings seem louder or softer, clearer or noisier?
- How would you sit or stand or walk if you had the feeling right now?
- Shift your seat or posture so that you are sitting or standing as you did in the past experience; how does that feel?
- What about your breathing? How did you breathe in the past experience? How are you breathing now?

- What's it like as you shift your current breathing to be more like that past experience?

Notice that the longer you do these comparisons the more you feel now like you did then. Why is that?

By asking yourself the questions above, you can set up the equivalent of a mental bookmark for your self from your past. Any time you want to get back some of the feelings from the past, all you really have to do is spend a few minutes seeing what you saw then, hearing what you heard, and feeling with your skin and body what you felt at the time. You already do this with friends and family. When you get together you tell stories, happy or sad, and as everyone goes back and re-experiences the sensations of the event, they get some of the feelings. If you spend a few minutes thinking about what you saw and heard and felt at a funeral of a loved one it is pretty easy to get back some of the sadness. It works the same way for good feelings too, which is why people reminisce about "glory days."

The way you feel at any moment in time is influenced by what comes before it and after it, the same way a word gets much of its meaning from the words before and after it. When you spend a few minutes refreshing positive memories, the present moment comes to have those memories as part of its context. Feelings have a powerful influence on our performance. When we feel "down" we usually don't perform as well as when we feel "up". By using a mental bookmark to re-capture past feelings of resourceful times you bring those resources to the present. Just as figuring out a word by context doesn't give you the exact definition, using a mental bookmark doesn't make you feel exactly the way you felt in the past. Instead it helps you feel similarly about the current situation, which means you will have similar resources available for the current situation.

In outline form, the way to create a mental bookmark is

1. Think of a state of mind you would like to have more often; a feeling, an inner resource
2. Think of a time when you had that state of mind or feeling or resource. The example might not have anything to do with the task at hand. One woman with used her confidence at the pool table to conquer her fear of public speaking. She made a mental bookmark for playing pool, and used it when she prepared for the speech. She

used it again just before taking the stage. Imagine if you felt about reading the same way as you feel about your favorite sport, hobby, or TV show!

3. Let yourself relive the example experience. See now what you saw at the time of the original experience, the same way you saw it at that time. Hear now what you heard at the time of the original experience, the way you heard it at that time. Feel on your skin and in your muscles what you felt then. You might have noticed that many of the questions asked you to compare, contrast, or rate the strength of a sensation. This helps you get deeper into the sensations. When the mind is filled with those sensations it will greatly influence your present state of mind as well.
4. Use your body and voice and eyes to re-create as much of the past experience in the present moment as is practical. In the example of the “public speaking and pool playing” bookmark, the person couldn’t very well take a pool cue on stage with her. Instead she could, and did, pay attention to the way she placed her feet, to her breathing, to the tension in her face and across her shoulder blades. She could and did control all of these things at will, and they helped her get back to the bookmark experience anytime she needed it. Eventually just taking a breath through her nose to “smell” the chalk in her mind, just imagining the feel of the felt of the pool table was enough to bring back the feeling of confidence.

Using your body and eyes and voice is very important. A mental bookmark is only a guide, just like a real bookmark in a book. The bookmark doesn’t have the information on it; it just makes it easier to find the desired information quickly. In a similar fashion, your mental bookmark isn’t magic. A mental bookmark isn’t a button that will just turn on the desired feeling. Instead it is a reminder of where you’ve felt it before and how to get it back now. It is still up to you to use your body and voice and eyes and imagination to recapture the feeling. If you practice you will get better and faster at it, so that you can do it almost without thinking.

You can use a mental bookmark for many different situations. Anytime you want better access to some past feeling or ability, make a bookmark for it. Common, and very useful, bookmarks are for relaxation and sleep, for concentration and alertness, for good times and fun socializing, and for

dealing calmly and successfully with unpleasant people or other stressful situations.

What would happen if every time you went to work or school you “looked up your bookmark” for the feelings of competence and success that you want in that setting? What would happen if every time you went home you “looked up your bookmark” for the feelings of love and respect that you had for your partner in the beginning of the relationship? You can find many repetitive situations for which you can use a bookmark. Use the bookmark often enough before a situation and you will find the feelings and resources start to manifest automatically in that situation. Improving your ability to read is only one small example of what using mental bookmarks can do for you.

4.3 Four Kinds of Reading

Most people seem to think there is one kind of reading, and that anything else isn't “really” reading. If you have done the drills in chapter one and also done the drills in this chapter, you are ready to start thinking differently. Instead, think of there being four kinds of reading called Reciting, Reading, Skimming, and Scanning. Reciting is verbal, pure and simple. Reciting is the way to read for an audience. Reciting is the way to read poems. You can recite in your head, and most people are limited to reading 200 words per minute exactly because they are silently reciting the work to themselves instead of reading. Reading is what the drills in chapter one teach. Reading is taking in every word with your eyes and gathering the meaning of those words in natural groups based on meaning. This kind of reading seems to have an upper limit of about 1,000 words per minute, which is still four to five times faster than most people's “normal” reading. Next is skimming. Skimming is visual, and it is very fast, but it doesn't really gather every word or even every meaning group. Instead, skimming is a way to get the flavor of a book or article. Finally there's scanning. Scanning can give a wealth of information, and scanning is the best way to get the overall structure of a book. Often understanding that overall structure is more valuable than reading the individual words.

Which is better? Which is more important, Reciting, Reading, Skimming, or Scanning? The answer is entirely up to you. Your needs, your wants, your desires determine what kind of reading is best. Those needs

will change with each item you read, so naturally you will shift back and forth among all four styles of reading as best suits your needs. Having the choice, that's the big trick. If you have done the drills in the book, you will have that choice.

Chapter 5

The Rewards

More free time may be the biggest reward speed reading will bring you. Reading faster means less time spent reading things you don't like. Freeing time to read the books you haven't had time for is probably the second biggest reward of this method. These rewards are fairly obvious, but this final chapter offers other rewards you might have overlooked. Most of the rewards for speed reading are the same things that make reading fun in the first place.

Physical relaxation Reading is physically relaxing. Reading mode is much like meditation, which is why many people read themselves to sleep; it is easier to let sleep take over from the middle of reading than it is from worrying about your daughter's college fund. Speed reading enhances relaxation, because concentration enhances relaxation. You have to relax to read well, and reading helps you relax.

Escape Sometimes you want to get away from it all. Reading is a great way to do this. When you are reading you aren't mulling over the day's problems. Putting everything else on a back burner can even help some problems. Reading doesn't fix your problems directly, but it can take the pressure off of you, letting you return later, fresh and better equipped for problem solving. Setting our problems down lets us start with a fresh perspective. Often solutions pop out after taking this kind of break. Much like having a word on the tip of your tongue, sometimes trying to solve a problem or figure out some question only makes things worse. The harder

you try, the farther you seem to be from the answer. Sometimes your brain does better at problem solving with the work going on in the back of the mind. The front part of the mind gets to follow a story or learn about something while in the back of the mind the problem is being solved. Reading is a great way to do this.

The other part of escape is that some things are worth escaping from. People in hospitals, people stuck in boring jobs or other unhappy circumstances can read as a way of getting away from it all. A person can also learn how to get out of a bad situation while they are using reading to escape from it on a short term basis, thus killing two birds with one stone. Unlike other types of escape, reading can numb our pain and teach us long term solutions as well.

Travel Reading is a way to go places. Reading takes us to different lands, different times, even different planets. Reading lets you see things you would never otherwise see. This is one of the reasons historical novels and science fiction are so popular. Both genres let people go places and do things they normally couldn't. With books you can go anywhere you like. Most people don't have time or money to travel as much as they might like. Reading can make up for this. From travel diaries to fiction in exotic settings, reading can take you all over the world.

Celebrity The same way reading can take you places where you might never otherwise go, it can also introduce you to people you wish you could know better. You can read about your favorite sports hero, or movie star, or scientist, or politician. Reading is a great way to "meet" people that you can't otherwise get to know. Reading about your favorite celebrity will bring you much closer to them than a quick introduction at a party. A backstage handshake is a thrill, but it doesn't really stand up to knowing the experiences that made your favorite celebrity who and what they are. An autograph in a book doesn't make a celebrity a friend. Reading a celebrity's biography leaves you feeling you know them, lets you understand who they are and how they got there.

Learning Which is more true for you: "Learning is cool" or "Learning was forced down my throat by my teachers"? This is similar to the questions about reading in the first chapter of this book, but there is an im-

portant difference. Not every one enjoys reading, but everyone enjoys learning, even if they don't know it.

Humans learn more effectively and efficiently than any computer. Everybody who speaks and walks has learned. Spending time around infants will show you the most effective learning machine ever created. For instance, you may have heard that children learn languages more easily than adults, but there are important differences between the child's situation and that of the adult. Adults learning a second language have a huge head start: years of experience with their first language. When an adult tries to learn a second language they are also trying to keep their job, pay the bills, and do a thousand other things children don't have to do. When a child learns it's first language it doesn't work on much of anything else. If you had the free time an infant has, you could learn each new language faster than a child, because of your prior knowledge. By contrast, a child learns a language from scratch. A child doesn't have words in a first language to relate to words in the new language. Only our first language is learned from scratch, from a million little clues, without any systematic methods.

Not only are children incredible learning machines, they enjoy learning. Learning gets them more of what they want, true, but they enjoy the process of learning just as much as they do the results. Only when babies turn into toddlers and preschoolers do they learn terrible things such as, "School is hard," "Reading is boring," "Learning is a drag." These messages come from their parents, relatives, TV, and friends. Enough of these anti-learning messages can brainwash anyone into not enjoying learning. Attitudes about learning and reading don't just spring up out of nowhere. They are taught by methods much more effective than those used by many teachers. Children hear a million jokes and stories about how bad school is. They hear grown-ups talk about how glad they are to be out of school. They hear older friends talk about getting in trouble at school. What attitudes would you expect a person to have about school and learning in a situation like this? The number and emotional impact of messages supporting school and learning can't compete with the number and emotional impact of the constant messages against school and learning.

Our attitudes don't always match our experiences. The story of "The New Coke" is famous example where attitudes proved more powerful than experience. The Coca-Cola company held blind taste tests that showed people preferred a new formula to Coke's original formula. These tests

were based on sensory experience: when asked which of two samples tasted better, the majority of people chose the new formula. Despite these test results, when the new Coke was introduced in 1985 it bombed. Coke buyers had attitudes about the advertising and the change in the formula. Those attitudes were more powerful than the taste of the beverage. The same thing happens to many people with their attitudes about learning: attitudes are subtly ingrained by others and gain power over the actual experience of learning.

If you let yourself, you will remember things you enjoyed learning and the times you learned them. Maybe you memorized batting averages of your favorite baseball teams, or rushing statistics for your favorite football teams. Maybe you knew the names of all the members of your favorite band and all the words to all their songs. It doesn't matter what you learned, as long as you can recall some time when you enjoyed the act of learning. One of the greatest things about reading is learning more about things that interest you. In school and at work you learn what other people tell you to learn. When you read on your own, you learn about things that interest you. This can make reading loads of fun! Of course speed reading makes it that much more fun, by giving you more learning with less time and effort.

Conversation Pieces Reading gives us something to talk about, as do movies and sports and television. Reading gives people something to share when they come together. Even people who disagree can have a great time discussing their differing opinions about a book, just as they would about a movie or TV show or sports event.

If you ever enjoy movies or television shows, then you already enjoy reading—but it was someone else's reading. Movies and television shows are, in essence, book reports of other people's reading. When you wrote book reports in school you had to figure out what the teacher wanted to hear. Film and television directors and producers have to figure out what audiences will pay to see. Stories can be interpreted in different ways. A marvelous example can be found in different productions of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet." There are three well-known movie versions: one directed by Zeffirelli from the mid-sixties, Baz Luhrmann's version from the mid-nineties, and Stephen Sondheim's "West Side Story." All three of these films were commercial successes. Each film started with the same

basic material, a play written four hundred years earlier. Despite sharing the same source these three movies look completely different and draw completely different audiences. In truth, no two people get exactly the same things out of any book, which makes reading a tremendous source of conversation.

Every Word Paints a Thousand Pictures In 1938 Orson Welles' Mercury Theater performed a Halloween radio broadcast of H.G. Wells' "War of the Worlds." The radio broadcast was presented as a newscast, and thousands of people who tuned in thought they were hearing real news of a real invasion from mars. Reports of panicked citizens came from all over the country. What would happen if Welles tried his broadcast on television today? Few people would mistake the show for real news. Television viewers recognize actors' faces and can see through special effects. Why?

Radio doesn't provide pictures. Instead, radio guides the listener to a certain point then lets the listener decide what it all looks like. The radio listener makes their own movie to accompany the soundtrack from the radio. Since each listener makes up their own pictures, those pictures will always be an exact fit with each individual's expectations.

Similarly, writers use words to guide readers and readers fill in the gaps, so there is less chance for conflict with the reader's expectations. Some people think that a movie can't live up to the book that inspired it because too much will be omitted, but what gets added is just as important as what gets cut. Mood music, set decorations, costumes, extras, all get added to a movie and can detract from the overall effect of a story. These additions compete with the sights and sounds and feelings that came from reading the book first. As an example, 1978 saw the release of Ralph Bakshi's film version of "The Lord of the Rings." Some thought Bakshi was the only animator good enough for the job. Despite this, many people were sorely disappointed with the film, because it looked wrong and sounded wrong based on readers' expectations. Bakshi added things that didn't work for many people.

So far, the rewards we've talked about are common to all types of reading. These last two rewards are unique to speed reading.

The Flash of Inspiration Speed reading is like the creative process in reverse. In writing or composing or painting there is an initial flash of an idea in the mind of the artist. Thoughts follow from this flash, often in wild order and with a sense of urgency. The artist must tame these flashes, must whip them into a shape that the audience can handle. If the artist does their job right, crafting words or sounds or images, the audience will get a sense of the flash that started it all. Speed reading brings people closer to this creative flash. Writing can be as slow as you can imagine. Days can go by with nothing worthwhile being produced. Reading is much faster than writing! Writing takes longer because the writer has to search for the words that will give the reader a sense of the creative flash. Speed readers don't read words; they read thoughts and ideas. That's because speed reading pays attention to concepts and larger patterns. Remember, that's what paragraphs and sentences are supposed to be, thoughts and ideas that stand apart. Sometimes the goal of reading is to answer questions for the boss or teacher. Other times the goal is to feel more deeply, to have your thoughts go farther into topics than they normally would, to get closer to that creative flash.

Conclusion Here you are at the end of the book. Congratulations!! Either you have finished the main part of the book, or you are looking ahead, reading parts out of order. In the first case the congratulations are for sticking with it and achieving a goal. It is up to you to practice what you have learned, to make it tangible and real in your life. In the second case the congratulations are for being daring and recognizing that the book is here to serve you and that there's no reason not to skip around if you feel like it. I hope you enjoy the rest of the book!

Either way, keep in mind that speed reading is a skill. Like any skill, you have to practice to learn speed reading. Speed reading must be practiced to be maintained. Like any other skill, speed reading can pay great dividends for the time you invest in it, but only if you make the investment. Like any other skill, speed reading must fit your self image and self concept. If you find you aren't using the method as well as you think you could, go back to Chapter 5, The Obstacles. Review that chapter and discover what stands in your way.

Finally, you can always benefit from repeating the drills. Do the drills as often as you feel they help. Do them to keep your skills sharp, or to

push beyond the limits of the progress you have already made. The true limits are really up to you.

Appendix A

Glossary of Semantic Restructuring

By now you might have stopped wondering just what the title of this book means. The “Look, Ma, No Hands” part is probably clear, that has to do with the lack of hand pacing. And the speed reading part is probably the part that got you to pick up the book in the first place. But the “Semantic Restructuring” part of the title probably doesn’t mean much to you yet. Semantic restructuring is really what the whole book is about. The short definition is that semantic restructuring is the applied art of re-arranging the building blocks of meaning. And that is exactly what you have done by learning to take in written information without having to first hear it, you have re-arranged the process by which you make meaning of what you see on a page. I have used and taught the principles of Semantic Restructuring in personal development seminars and in private practice since the mid 1990s, and it was this work that lead me to write this book as a way to introduce people to ideas such as mental bookmarks and automatic knowing. How fast you read is really a trivial issue compared to all the things you can do with the ideas you have already read about in the context of reading faster and better.

Context may be the single most important concept for you to master in the beginning. Context is what makes the speed reading system work, words in context of other words making meaning-based groups. But all meaning is controlled or influenced by context, and context includes all the sights and sounds and smells and tastes and feelings in the data banks of our brains. Asking the questions “What is reading” and “What is un-

derstanding" allowed you to change the context of those words, and the new meaning that comes from that change lets you experience an entirely new relationship with the written word.

Ideas such as five brain theory, the mountain lake, and chunking are valuable tools for anyone wanting greater ability to change their behavior for the better. Ideas like these are the foundation of a set of skill that let people cure phobias, quit compulsive behaviors, and achieve states of excellence only dreamed of before. Mental bookmarks are one example of a specific method for accessing states of excellence or resourcefulness.

The rest of this appendix is a short glossary of some of the important ideas you've been exposed to already.

Automatic Knowing What some people call intuition. Most often this is learned knowledge that we simply have forgotten learning. A primary example is language, most of us don't really perceive the acts that go into learning our native tongue..in part because as infants learning a language we don't have any words to help us. "Two plus two equals four" is an example of automatic knowing that most of us take for granted. But anyone who has had to teach even simple arithmetic to a youngster knows that what may be automatic knowledge for one person is very difficult learning for another.

Closure/Chunk Encoding Related to Automatic Knowing. When we have learned a task well enough we can perform without even perceiving what we do. A good example is applying the breaks in your car while driving. When learning to drive you were probably very aware of the feeling of pressing the brake pedal and the effect it had on the car. As an experienced driver you alternate between brake and accelerator naturally and comfortably without noticing unless there is some special circumstance. What was previously a set of sensations and related actions has become a single chunk. Another way to say it is you have closure for that experience; it's over, done, doesn't need to be picked apart and examined each time you perform it. Miller's idea of Chunks is tied to this idea, what may be a bunch of separate perceptions at one point later is one single chunk.

Chunk A variable amount of information. Most people most of the time can pay attention to seven, give or take a couple, chunks of information at one time, but each chunk can be a very different size or type

of information. For example, you can think of a ring, a planet, a person, a plant, and a song all at the same time, even though a planet is bigger than the other things put together.

Personal Ecology If being a speed reader is going to make your job worse because you will get stuck with the unwanted reading tasks you probably aren't going to become a speed reader. Another way to say this is that speed reading is not an ecologically sound option for your personal situation. It doesn't matter how valuable a skill or experience might be in general; if it doesn't fit your life, if it isn't ecological for who you are, then it is not going to be valuable to you.

Intangible The noun, "Reading" is really derived from the verb, "to read." Knowing how to spot fake nouns, nouns that are derived from verbs, can help you find places where your thinking is stuck and keeping you from acting the way you want to act and doing the things you want to do. The speed reading method in this book was developed primarily by asking what it really means to read, after realizing that "reading" is an intangible.

Logical Levels Related to chunks. Curves and lines are separate chunks at one point in perceptual development, later they combine to make patterns called letters. Later still these letters become individual chunks and combine to make up words. Later these words become individual chunks. The shift from curves and lines to letters is a logical level step up; letters are patterns of lines and curves. Likewise, words are a logical level up from letters; words are made up of letters. The primary value in the idea of logical levels comes from reminding us that things we normally think of as being a single thing are often really made up of other smaller things and rearranging those smaller things can make a difference in how we see and act in the world.

Mental Bookmarks Context is more than just the words surrounding the word being analyzed. Context includes all the things you have ever seen or felt or tasted. What you are feeling now is very much influenced by the context of what is going on in your mind, and vice-versa. Our mental landscape makes the context for our physical experience, and our physical experience makes the context for our

mental landscape. Mental bookmarks are a way to take advantage of this influence of context to re-create experiences. They can be used to make it easier to feel the way we want or need to feel in order to perform the way we need or want to perform.

Multiple Descriptions Five brain theory is a way to talk about the different descriptions we each have of our world. The world of our nose is very different from the world of our eyes, even though there really is only the one world that they both share. In general it is valuable to have a variety of descriptions of things to choose from—if we also have a useful method for determining which descriptions to use when. Put differently, the pictures on a menu at a restaurant may be mouthwateringly good to look at, but the description your tongue gives you when you put the menu in your mouth will probably be a disappointment.

Reality—Representation We assume there is a real world out there somewhere, but our senses can only report on a very small part of that real world. What we actually do sense is very much less than what is possible to be sensed (most people never see the Taj Majal.) Call what we actually do sense “experience.” What we notice is very much less than what we experience. Call what the experiences we notice “perception.” What we can put in words is very much less than what we perceive; call that representation. These perceptions and representations control what we do and how we act in the world. Learn to creatively change them and you can creatively change what you do and how you act in the world.

Appendix B

Drill Schedule

Every day's drills consist of nine sets of one minute each. The speed changes minute to minute, the word group size changes twice during the day's drills. Here is the long version of the drill table...

Day One: V1, S1, N1, F1, V2, F1, N1, S1, V1

- One minute reading single words at Very Slow
- One minute reading single words at Slow
- One minute reading single words at Normal
- One minute reading single words at Fast
- One minute reading word pairs at Very Slow
- One minute reading single words at Fast
- One minute reading single words at Normal
- One minute reading single words at Slow
- One minute reading single words at Very Slow

Day Two: S1, N1, F1, V2, S2, V2, F1, N1, S1

One minute reading single words at Slow
One minute reading single words at Normal
One minute reading single words at Fast
One minute reading word pairs at Very Slow
One minute reading word pairs at Slow
One minute reading word pairs at Very Slow
One minute reading single words at Fast
One minute reading single words at Normal
One minute reading single words at Slow

Day Three: V2, S2, N2, F2, V3, F2, N2, S2, V2

One minute reading word pairs at Very Slow
One minute reading word pairs at Slow
One minute reading word pairs at Normal
One minute reading word pairs at Fast
One minute reading trios of words at Very Slow
One minute reading word pairs at Fast
One minute reading word pairs at Normal
One minute reading word pairs at Slow
One minute reading word pairs at Very Slow

Day Four: S2, N2, F2, V3, S3, V3, F2, N2, S2

One minute reading word pairs at Slow
One minute reading word pairs at Normal
One minute reading word pairs at Fast
One minute reading trios of words at Very Slow
One minute reading trios of words at Slow
One minute reading trios of words at Very Slow
One minute reading word pairs at Fast
One minute reading word pairs at Normal
One minute reading word pairs at Slow

Day Five: V3, S3, N3, F3, V4, F3, N3, S3, V3

- One minute reading trios of words at Very Slow
- One minute reading trios of words at Slow
- One minute reading trios of words at Normal
- One minute reading trios of words at Fast
- One minute reading sets of four words at Very Slow
- One minute reading trios of words at Fast
- One minute reading trios of words at Normal
- One minute reading trios of words at Slow
- One minute reading trios of words at Very Slow

Day Six: S3, N3, F3, V4, S4, V4, F3, N3, S3

- One minute reading trios of words at Slow
- One minute reading trios of words at Normal
- One minute reading trios of words at Fast
- One minute reading sets of four words at Very Slow
- One minute reading sets of four words at Slow
- One minute reading sets of four words at Very Slow
- One minute reading trios of words at Fast
- One minute reading trios of words at Normal
- One minute reading trios of words at Slow

Day Seven: V4, S4, N4, F4, Vph, F4, N4, S4, V4

- One minute reading sets of four words at Very Slow
- One minute reading sets of four words at Slow
- One minute reading sets of four words at Normal
- One minute reading sets of four words at Fast
- One minute reading phrases at Very Slow
- One minute reading sets of four words at Fast
- One minute reading sets of four words at Normal
- One minute reading sets of four words at Slow
- One minute reading sets of four words at Very Slow

Day Eight: S4, N4, F4, Vph, Sph, Vph, F4, N4, S4

- One minute reading sets of four words at Slow
- One minute reading sets of four words at Normal
- One minute reading sets of four words at Fast
- One minute reading phrases at Very Slow
- One minute reading phrases at Slow
- One minute reading phrases at Very Slow
- One minute reading sets of four words at Fast
- One minute reading sets of four words at Normal
- One minute reading sets of four words at Slow

Day Nine: Vph, Sph, Nph, Fph, V1/4, Fph, Nph, Sph, Vph

- One minute reading phrases at Very Slow
- One minute reading phrases at Slow
- One minute reading phrases at Normal
- One minute reading phrases at Fast
- One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Very Slow
- One minute reading phrases at Fast
- One minute reading phrases at Normal
- One minute reading phrases at Slow
- One minute reading phrases at Very Slow

Day Ten: Sph, Nph, Fph, V1/4, S1/4, V1/4, Fph, Nph, Sph

- One minute reading phrases at Slow
- One minute reading phrases at Normal
- One minute reading phrases at Fast
- One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Very Slow
- One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Slow
- One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Very Slow
- One minute reading phrases at Fast
- One minute reading phrases at Normal
- One minute reading phrases at Slow

Day Eleven: V1/4, S1/4, N1/4, F1/4, Vph, F1/4, N1/4, S1/4, V1/4

One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Very Slow
One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Slow
One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Normal
One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Fast
One minute reading phrases at Very Slow
One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Fast
One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Normal
One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Slow
One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Very Slow

Day Twelve: S1/4, N1/4, F1/4, Vph, Sph, Vph, F1/4, N1/4, S1/4

One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Slow
One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Normal
One minute reading one fourth of a line per count at Fast
One minute reading phrases at Very Slow
One minute reading phrases at Slow
One minute reading phrases at Very Slow
One minute reading phrases at Fast
One minute reading phrases at Normal
One minute reading phrases at Slow

Day Thirteen: Sph, Nph, Fph, V1/3, S1/3, V1/3, Fph, Nph, Sph

One minute reading phrases at Slow
One minute reading phrases at Normal
One minute reading phrases at Fast
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Very Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Very Slow
One minute reading phrases at Fast
One minute reading phrases at Normal
One minute reading phrases at Slow

Day Fourteen: V1/3, S1/3, N1/3, F1/3, Vph, F1/3, N1/3, S1/3, V1/3

One minute reading one third of a line per count at Very Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Normal
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Fast
One minute reading phrases at Very Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Fast
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Normal
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Very Slow

Day Fifteen: V1/3, S1/3, N1/3, F1/3, Vcl, F1/3, N1/3, S1/3, V1/3

One minute reading one third of a line per count at Very Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Normal
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Fast
One minute reading clauses at Very Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Fast
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Normal
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Very Slow

Day Sixteen: S1/3, N1/3, F1/3, Vcl, Scl, Vcl, F1/3, N1/3, S1/3

One minute reading one third of a line per count at Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Normal
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Fast
One minute reading clauses at Very Slow
One minute reading clauses at Slow
One minute reading clauses at Very Slow
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Fast
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Normal
One minute reading one third of a line per count at Slow

Day Seventeen: Vcl, Scl, Ncl, Fcl, V1/2, Fcl, Ncl, Scl, Vcl

- One minute reading clauses at Very Slow
- One minute reading clauses at Slow
- One minute reading clauses at Normal
- One minute reading clauses at Fast
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Very Slow
- One minute reading clauses at Fast
- One minute reading clauses at Normal
- One minute reading clauses at Slow
- One minute reading clauses at Very Slow

Day Eighteen: Scl, Ncl, Fcl, V1/2, S1/2, V1/2, Fcl, Ncl, Scl

- One minute reading clauses at Slow
- One minute reading clauses at Normal
- One minute reading clauses at Fast
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Very Slow
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Slow
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Very Slow
- One minute reading clauses at Fast
- One minute reading clauses at Normal
- One minute reading clauses at Slow

Day Nineteen: V1/2, S1/2, N1/2, F1/2, Vcl, F1/2, N1/2, S1/2, V1/2

- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Very Slow
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Slow
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Normal
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Fast
- One minute reading clauses at Very Slow
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Fast
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Normal
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Slow
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Very Slow

Day Twenty: V1/2, S1/2, N1/2, F1/2, Vsn, F1/2, N1/2, S1/2, V1/2

- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Very Slow
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Slow
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Normal
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Fast
- One minute reading one sentence per count at Very Slow
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Fast
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Normal
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Slow
- One minute reading one half of a line per count at Very Slow

Day Twenty-One: Scl, Ncl, Fcl, Vsn, Ssn, Vsn, Fcl, Ncl, Scl

- One minute reading clauses at Slow
- One minute reading clauses at Normal
- One minute reading clauses at Fast
- One minute reading one sentence per count at Very Slow
- One minute reading one sentence per count at Slow
- One minute reading one sentence per count at Very Slow
- One minute reading clauses at Fast
- One minute reading clauses at Normal
- One minute reading clauses at Slow

Appendix C

Text for first five days of drills

It is very important for you to pick fun, easy material for doing the drills. The reason for this is explained in Chapter Two. But it can be difficult to get started, so this appendix includes the full text of Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience", broken up into 45 pieces to suit the first five days of drills.

C.1 Day One Drills

V1, S1, N1, F1, V2, F1, N1, S1, V1

One minute at Very Slow, Single words

On the Duty of Civil Disobedience by Henry David Thoreau [1849, original title: Resistance to Civil Government] I heartily accept the motto, "That government is best which governs least"; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe—"That government is best which governs

One minute at Slow, Single words

not at all"; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which the will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and

all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The government itself, which is only the mode which the

One minute at Normal, Single words

people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure.

This American government—what is it but a tradition, though a recent one, endeavoring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instant losing some of its integrity? It has not the vitality and force of a single living man; for a single man can bend it to his will. It is a sort of wooden gun to the people themselves. But it is not the

One minute at Fast, Single words

less necessary for this; for the people must have some complicated machinery or other, and hear its din, to satisfy that idea of government which they have. Governments show thus how successfully men can be imposed upon, even impose on themselves, for their own advantage. It is excellent, we must all allow. Yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. It does not keep the country free. It does not settle the West. It does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way. For government is an expedient, by which men would fain succeed in letting one another alone; and, as has been said, when it is most expedient, the governed are most let alone by it. Trade and commerce, if they were not made of india-rubber,

would never manage to bounce over obstacles which legislators are continually putting in their way;

One minute at Very Slow, Word pairs

and if one were to judge these men wholly by the effects of their actions and not partly by their intentions, they would deserve to be classed and punished with those mischievous persons who put obstructions on the railroads.

But, to speak practically and as a citizen, unlike those who call themselves no-government men, I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government. Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it.

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule

One minute at Fast, Single words

is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. But a government in which the majority rule in all cases can not be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Can there not be a government in which the majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience—in which majorities decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable? Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation on conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience.

One minute at Normal, Single words

Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents on injustice. A common and natural result of an undue respect for the law is, that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys, and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all? or small movable forts

One minute at Slow, Single words

and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power? Visit the Navy Yard, and behold a marine, such a man as an American government can make, or such as it can make a man with its black arts—a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity, a man laid out alive and standing, and already, as one may say, buried under arms with funeral accompaniment, though it may be,

“Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged

One minute at Very Slow, Single words

his farewell shot
O’er the grave where out hero was buried.”

The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, jailers, constables, posse comitatus, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgement or of the moral sense; but

C.2 Day Two Drills

S1, N1, F1, V2, S2, V2, F1, N1, S1

One minute at Slow, Single words

they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens. Others—as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office-holders—serve the state chiefly with their heads; and, as the rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to

One minute at Normal, Single words

serve the devil, without intending it, as God. A very few—as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and men—serve the state with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated as enemies by it. A wise man will only be useful as a man, and will not submit to be “clay,” and “stop a hole to keep the wind away,” but leave that office to his dust at least:

“I am too high born to be propertied,
To be a second at control,
Or useful serving-man and instrument
To any sovereign state throughout the world.”

He who gives himself entirely to his fellow

One minute at Fast, Single words

men appears to them useless and selfish; but he who gives himself partially to them in pronounced a benefactor and philanthropist.

How does it become a man to behave toward the American government today? I answer, that he cannot without disgrace

be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also.

All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to, and to resist, the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable. But almost all say that such is not the case now. But such was the case, they think, in the Revolution of '75. If one were to tell me that this was a bad government because it taxed certain foreign commodities brought to its ports, it is most probable that I should not make an ado about it, for I can do without them. All machines have their friction; and possibly this does enough good to counter-balance the evil. At any rate, it is a great evil

One minute at Very Slow, Word pairs

to make a stir about it. But when the friction comes to have its machine, and oppression and robbery are organized, I say, let us not have such a machine any longer. In other words, when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. What makes this duty the more urgent is that fact that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is the invading army.

Paley, a common authority with many on

One minute at Slow, Word pairs

moral questions, in his chapter on the "Duty of Submission to Civil Government," resolves all civil obligation into expediency; and he proceeds to say that "so long as the interest of the whole society requires it, that it, so long as the established government cannot be resisted or changed without public inconvenience, it is the will of God. . .that the established government be obeyed—and no longer. This principle being admitted, the justice of every particular case of resistance is reduced to a computation of the quantity of the danger and grievance

on the one side, and of the probability and expense of redressing it on the other." Of this, he says, every man shall judge for himself. But Paley appears never to have contemplated those cases to which the rule of expediency does not apply, in which a people, as well as an individual, must do justice, cost what it may. If I have unjustly wrested a plank from a drowning man, I must restore it to him though I drown myself. This, according to Paley, would be inconvenient.

One minute at Very Slow, Word pairs

But he that would save his life, in such a case, shall lose it. This people must cease to hold slaves, and to make war on Mexico, though it cost them their existence as a people.

In their practice, nations agree with Paley; but does anyone think that Massachusetts does exactly what is right at the present crisis?

"A drab of stat,
a cloth-o'-silver slut,
To have her train borne up,
and her soul trail in the dirt."

Practically speaking, opponents to a reform in Massachusetts are not a hundred thousand politicians at the South, but a hundred thousand merchants and farmers here, who are more interested in commerce and agriculture than they are in humanity, and are

One minute at Fast, Single words

not prepared to do justice to the slave and to Mexico, cost what it may. I quarrel not with far-off foes, but with those who, neat at home, co-operate with, and do the bidding of, those far away, and without whom the latter would be harmless. We are accustomed to say, that the mass of men are unprepared; but improvement is slow, because the few are not as materially wiser or better than the many. It is not so important that many

should be good as you, as that there be some absolute goodness somewhere; for that will leaven the whole lump. There are thousands who are in opinion opposed to slavery and to the war, who yet in effect do nothing to put an end to them; who, esteeming themselves children of Washington and Franklin, sit down with their hands in their pockets, and say that they know not what to do, and do nothing; who even postpone the question of freedom to the question of free trade, and quietly read the prices-current along with the latest advices from

One minute at Normal, Single words

Mexico, after dinner, and, it may be, fall asleep over them both. What is the price-current of an honest man and patriot today? They hesitate, and they regret, and sometimes they petition; but they do nothing in earnest and with effect. They will wait, well disposed, for other to remedy the evil, that they may no longer have it to regret. At most, they give up only a cheap vote, and a feeble countenance and Godspeed, to the right, as it goes by them. There are nine hundred and ninety-nine patrons of virtue to one virtuous man. But it is easier to deal with the real possessor of a thing than with the temporary guardian of it.

All voting

One minute at Slow, Single words

is a sort of gaming, like checkers or backgammon, with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it. The character of the voters is not staked. I cast my vote, perchance, as I think right; but I am not vitally concerned that that right should prevail. I am willing to leave it to the majority. Its obligation, therefore, never exceeds that of expediency. Even voting for the right is doing nothing for it. It is only expressing to

C.3 Day Three Drills

V2, S2, N2, F2, V3, F2, N2, S2, V2

One minute at Very Slow, Word pairs

men feebly your desire that it should prevail. A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish it to prevail through the power of the majority. There is but little virtue in the action of masses of men. When the majority shall at length vote for the abolition of slavery, it will be because they are indifferent to slavery, or because there is but little slavery left to be abolished by their vote. They will then be the only slaves. Only his vote can hasten the abolition of slavery who asserts his own freedom by his vote.

I hear of a convention to be held at Baltimore, or elsewhere, for the selection of a

One minute at Slow, Word pairs

candidate for the Presidency, made up chiefly of editors, and men who are politicians by profession; but I think, what is it to any independent, intelligent, and respectable man what decision they may come to? Shall we not have the advantage of this wisdom and honesty, nevertheless? Can we not count upon some independent votes? Are there not many individuals in the country who do not attend conventions? But no: I find that the respectable man, so called, has immediately drifted from his position, and despairs of his country, when his country has more reasons to despair of him. He forthwith adopts one of the candidates thus selected as the only available one, thus proving that he is himself available for any purposes of the demagogue. His vote is of no more worth than that of any unprincipled foreigner or hireling native, who may have been bought. O for a man who is a man, and, and my neighbor says, has a bone in his back which you cannot pass your hand through! Our statistics are at fault: the population

One minute at Normal, Word pairs

has been returned too large. How many men are there to a square thousand miles in the country? Hardly one. Does not America offer any inducement for men to settle here? The American has dwindled into an Odd Fellow—one who may be known by the development of his organ of gregariousness, and a manifest lack of intellect and cheerful self-reliance; whose first and chief concern, on coming into the world, is to see that the almshouses are in good repair; and, before yet he has lawfully donned the virile garb, to collect a fund to the support of the widows and orphans that may be; who, in short, ventures to live only by the aid of the Mutual Insurance company, which has promised to bury him decently.

It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even to most enormous, wrong; he may still properly have other concerns to engage him; but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and, if he gives it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support. If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders. I must get off him first, that he may pursue his contemplations too. See what gross inconsistency is tolerated. I have heard some of my

One minute at Fast, Word pairs

townsmen say, "I should like to have them order me out to help put down an insurrection of the slaves, or to march to Mexico—see if I would go"; and yet these very men have each, directly by their allegiance, and so indirectly, at least, by their money, furnished a substitute. The soldier is applauded who refuses to serve in an unjust war by those who do not refuse to sustain the unjust government which makes the war; is applauded by those whose own act and authority he disregards and sets at naught; as if the state were penitent to that degree that it hired one to scourge it while it sinned, but not to that degree that it left off sinning for a moment. Thus, under the name of Order and Civil Government, we are all made at last to pay homage

to and support our own meanness. After the first blush of sin comes its indifference; and from immoral it becomes, as it were, unmoral, and not quite unnecessary to that life which we have made.

The broadest and most prevalent error requires the most disinterested virtue to sustain it. The slight reproach to which the virtue of patriotism is commonly liable, the noble are most likely to incur. Those who, while they disapprove of the character and measures of a government, yield to it their allegiance and support are undoubtedly its most conscientious supporters, and so frequently the most serious obstacles to reform. Some are petitioning the State to dissolve the Union, to disregard the requisitions of the President. Why do they not dissolve it themselves—the union between themselves and the State—and refuse to pay their quota into its treasury? Do not they stand in same relation to the State that the State does to the Union? And have not the same reasons prevented the State from resisting the Union which have prevented them from resisting the State?

How can a man be satisfied to entertain an opinion merely, and enjoy it? Is there any enjoyment in it, if his opinion is that he is aggrieved? If you are cheated out of a single dollar by your

One minute at Very Slow, Word Trios

neighbor, you do not rest satisfied with knowing you are cheated, or with saying that you are cheated, or even with petitioning him to pay you your due; but you take effectual steps at once to obtain the full amount, and see to it that you are never cheated again. Action from principle, the perception and the performance of right, changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary, and does not consist wholly with anything which was. It not only divided States and churches, it divides families; ay, it divides the individual, separating the diabolical in him from the divine.

Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have suc-

ceeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men, generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the

One minute at Fast, Word pairs

remedy is worse than the evil. It makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to put out its faults, and do better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?

One would think, that a deliberate and practical denial of its authority was the only offense never contemplated by its government; else, why has it not assigned its definite, its suitable and proportionate, penalty? If a man who has no property refuses but once to earn nine shillings for the State, he is put in prison for a period unlimited by any law that I know, and determined only by the discretion of those who put him there; but if he should steal ninety times nine shillings from the State, he is soon permitted to go at large again.

If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth—certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

As for adopting the ways of the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to.

I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it

One minute at Normal, Word pairs

good or bad. A man has not everything to do, but something; and because he cannot do everything, it is not necessary that he should be petitioning the Governor or the Legislature any more than it is theirs to petition me; and if they should not hear my petition, what should I do then? But in this case the State has provided no way: its very Constitution is the evil. This may seem to be harsh and stubborn and unconciliatory; but it is to treat with the utmost kindness and consideration the only spirit that can appreciate or deserves it. So is all change for the better, like birth and death, which convulse the body.

I do not hesitate to say, that those who call themselves Abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them. I think that it is enough if they have God on their side, without waiting for that other one. Moreover, any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already.

I meet this American government, or its representative, the State government, directly, and face to face, once a year—no more—in the person of its tax-gatherer; this is the only mode in which a man situated as I am necessarily meets it; and it

One minute at Slow, Word pairs

then says distinctly, Recognize me; and the simplest, the most effectual, and, in the present posture of affairs, the indispensable mode of treating with it on this head, of expressing your little satisfaction with and love for it, is to deny it then. My civil neighbor, the tax-gatherer, is the very man I have to deal with—for it is, after all, with men and not with parchment that I quarrel—and he has voluntarily chosen to be an agent of the government. How shall he ever know well that he is and does as an officer of the government, or as a man, until he is obliged

to consider whether he will treat me, his neighbor, for whom he has respect, as a neighbor and well-disposed man, or as a maniac and disturber of the peace, and see if he can get over this obstruction to his neighborliness without a ruder and more impetuous thought or speech corresponding with his action. I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could

One minute at Very Slow, Word pairs

name—if ten honest men only—ay, if one HONEST man, in this State of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from this co-partnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefor, it would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done forever. But we love better to talk about it: that we say is our mission. Reform keeps many scores of newspapers in its service, but not one man. If my esteemed neighbor, the State's ambassador, who will devote his days to the settlement of the question of human rights in the Council Chamber, instead of being

C.4 Day Four Drills

S2, N2, F2, V3, S3, V3, F2, N2, S2

One minute at Slow, Word pairs

threatened with the prisons of Carolina, were to sit down the prisoner of Massachusetts, that State which is so anxious to foist the sin of slavery upon her sister—though at present she can discover only an act of inhospitality to be the ground of a quarrel with her—the Legislature would not wholly waive the subject of the following winter.

Under a government which imprisons unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place today, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less despondent spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles. It is there that the fugitive slave, and the Mexican prisoner on parole, and the Indian come to plead the wrongs of his race should find them; on that separate but more free and honorable ground, where the State places those who are not with her, but against her—the only house in a slave State in

One minute at Normal, Word pairs

which a free man can abide with honor. If any think that their influence would be lost there, and their voices no longer afflict the ear of the State, that they would not be as an enemy within its walls, they do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person. Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and

enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, "But what shall I do?" my answer is, "If you really wish to do anything, resign your office." When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned from office, then

One minute at Fast, Word pairs

the revolution is accomplished. But even suppose blood shed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man's real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now.

I have contemplated the imprisonment of the offender, rather than the seizure of his goods—though both will serve the same purpose—because they who assert the purest right, and consequently are most dangerous to a corrupt State, commonly have not spent much time in accumulating property. To such the State renders comparatively small service, and a slight tax is wont to appear exorbitant, particularly if they are obliged to earn it by special labor with their hands. If there were one who lived wholly without the use of money, the State itself would hesitate to demand it of him. But the rich man—not to make any invidious comparison—is always sold to the institution which makes him rich. Absolutely speaking, the more money, the less virtue; for money comes between a man and his objects, and obtains them for him; it was certainly no great virtue to obtain it. It puts to rest many questions which he would otherwise be taxed to answer; while the only new question which it puts is the hard but superfluous one, how to spend it. Thus his moral ground is taken from under his feet. The opportunities of living are diminished in proportion as that are called the "means" are increased. The best thing a man can do for his culture when he is rich is to endeavor to carry out those schemes which he entertained when he was poor. Christ answered the Herodians according to their condition. "Show me the tribute-money," said he—and one took a penny out of his pocket—if you use money

which has the image of Caesar on it, and which he has made current and valuable, that is, if you are men of the State, and gladly enjoy the advantages of Caesar's government, then pay him back some of his own when he demands it. "Render therefore to Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God

One minute at Very Slow, Word Trios

those things which are God's"—leaving them no wiser than before as to which was which; for they did not wish to know.

When I converse with the freest of my neighbors, I perceive that, whatever they may say about the magnitude and seriousness of the question, and their regard for the public tranquillity, the long and the short of the matter is, that they cannot spare the protection of the existing government, and they dread the consequences to their property and families of disobedience to it. For my own part, I should not like to think that I ever rely on the protection of the State. But, if I deny the authority of the State when it presents its tax bill, it will soon take and waste all my property, and so harass me and my children without end. This is hard. This makes it impossible for a man to live honestly, and at the same time comfortably, in outward respects. It will not be worth the while to accumulate property; that would be sure to go again. You

One minute at Slow, Word Trios

must hire or squat somewhere, and raise but a small crop, and eat that soon. You must live within yourself, and depend upon yourself always tucked up and ready for a start, and not have many affairs. A man may grow rich in Turkey even, if he will be in all respects a good subject of the Turkish government. Confucius said: "If a state is governed by the principles of reason, poverty and misery are subjects of shame; if a state is not governed by the principles of reason, riches and honors are subjects of shame." No: until I want the protection of Massachusetts to be extended to me in some distant Southern port, where my liberty is endangered, or until I am bent solely on

building up an estate at home by peaceful enterprise, I can afford to refuse allegiance to Massachusetts, and her right to my property and life. It costs me less in every sense to incur the penalty of disobedience to the State than it would to obey. I should feel as if I were worth less in that case.

Some years ago, the State met me in behalf of the Church, and commanded me to pay a certain sum toward the support of a clergyman whose preaching my father attended, but never I myself. "Pay," it said, "or be locked up in the jail." I declined to pay. But, unfortunately, another man saw fit to pay it. I did not see why the schoolmaster should be taxed to support the priest, and not the priest the schoolmaster; for I was not the State's schoolmaster,

One minute at Very Slow, Word Trios

but I supported myself by voluntary subscription. I did not see why the lyceum should not present its tax bill, and have the State to back its demand, as well as the Church. However, as the request of the selectmen, I condescended to make some such statement as this in writing: "Know all men by these presents, that I, Henry Thoreau, do not wish to be regarded as a member of any society which I have not joined." This I gave to the town clerk; and he has it. The State, having thus learned that I did not wish to be regarded as a member of that church, has never made a like demand on me since; though it said that it must adhere to its original presumption that time. If I had known how to name them, I should then have signed off in detail from all the societies which I never signed on to; but I did not know where to find such a complete list.

I have paid no poll tax for six years. I was put

One minute at Fast, Word pairs

into a jail once on this account, for one night; and, as I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the iron grating which strained the light, I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere

flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up. I wondered that it should have concluded at length that this was the best use it could put me to, and had never thought to avail itself of my services in some way. I saw that, if there was a wall of stone between me and my townsmen, there was a still more difficult one to climb or break through before they could get to be as free as I was. I did not for a moment feel confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar. I felt as if I alone of all my townsmen had paid my tax. They plainly did not know how to treat me, but behaved like persons who are underbred. In every threat and in every compliment there was a blunder; for they thought that my chief desire was to stand the other side of that stone wall. I could not but smile to see how industriously they locked the door on my meditations, which followed them out again without let or hindrance, and they were really all that was dangerous. As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body; just as boys, if they cannot come at some person against whom they have a spite, will abuse his dog. I saw that the State was half-witted, that it was timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it.

Thus the state never intentionally confronts a man's sense, intellectual or moral, but only his body, his senses. It is not armed with superior wisdom or honesty, but superior physical strength.

One minute at Normal, Word pairs

I was not born to be forced. I will breathe after my own fashion. Let us see who is the strongest. What force has a multitude? They only can force me who obey a higher law than I. They force me to become like themselves. I do not hear of men being forced to live this way or that by masses of men. What sort of life were that to live? When I meet a government which says to me, "Your money our your life," why should I be in haste to give it my money? It may be in a great strait, and not know what to do: I cannot help that. It must help itself; do as I do. It is not worth the while to snivel about it. I am not

responsible for the successful working of the machinery of society. I am not the son of the engineer. I perceive that, when an acorn and a chestnut fall side by side, the one does not remain inert to make way for the other, but both obey their own laws, and spring and grow and flourish as best they can, till one, perchance, overshadows and destroys the other. If a plant cannot live according to nature, it dies; and so a man.

The night in prison was novel and interesting enough. The prisoners in their shirtsleeves were enjoying a chat and the evening air in the doorway,

One minute at Slow, Word pairs

when I entered. But the jailer said, "Come, boys, it is time to lock up"; and so they dispersed, and I heard the sound of their steps returning into the hollow apartments. My roommate was introduced to me by the jailer as "a first-rate fellow and clever man." When the door was locked, he showed me where to hang my hat, and how he managed matters there. The rooms were whitewashed once a month; and this one, at least, was the whitest, most simply furnished, and probably neatest apartment in town. He naturally wanted to know where I came from, and what brought me there; and, when I had told him, I asked him in my turn how he came there, presuming him to be an honest an, of course; and as the world goes, I believe he was. "Why," said he, "they accuse me of burning a barn; but I never did it." As near as I could discover, he had probably gone to bed in a barn when drunk, and smoked his pipe there; and so a barn

C.5 Day Five Drills

V3, S3, N3, F3, V4, F3, N3, S3, V3

One minute at Very Slow, Word Trios

was burnt. He had the reputation of being a clever man, had been there some three months waiting for his trial to come on, and would have to wait as much longer; but he was quite domesticated and contented, since he got his board for nothing, and thought that he was well treated.

He occupied one window, and I the other; and I saw that if one stayed there long, his principal business would be to look out the window. I had soon read all the tracts that were left there, and examined where former prisoners had broken out, and where a grate had been sawed off, and heard the history of the various occupants of that room; for I found that even there there was a history and a gossip which never circulated beyond the walls of the jail. Probably this is the only house in the town where verses are composed, which are afterward printed in a circular form, but not published. I was shown quite a long list of young men who had been detected in an

One minute at Slow, Word Trios

attempt to escape, who avenged themselves by singing them.

I pumped my fellow-prisoner as dry as I could, for fear I should never see him again; but at length he showed me which was my bed, and left me to blow out the lamp.

It was like travelling into a far country, such as I had never expected to behold, to lie there for one night. It seemed to me that I never had heard the town clock strike before, not the evening sounds of the village; for we slept with the windows open, which were inside the grating. It was to see my native village in the light of the Middle Ages, and our Concord was turned into a Rhine stream, and visions of knights and castles passed before me. They were the voices of old burghers that I heard in the streets. I was an involuntary spectator and auditor of whatever was done and said in the kitchen of the adjacent

village inn—a wholly new and rare experience to me. It was a closer view of my native town. I was fairly inside of it. I never had seen its institutions before. This is one of its peculiar institutions; for it is a shire town. I began to comprehend what its inhabitants were about.

In the morning, our breakfasts were put through the hole in the door, in small oblong-square tin pans, made to fit, and holding a pint of chocolate, with brown bread, and an iron spoon. When they called for the vessels again, I was green enough to return what bread I had left, but my

One minute at Normal, Word Trios

comrade seized it, and said that I should lay that up for lunch or dinner. Soon after he was let out to work at haying in a neighboring field, whither he went every day, and would not be back till noon; so he bade me good day, saying he doubted if he should see me again.

When I came out of prison—for some one interfered, and paid that tax—I did not perceive that great changes had taken place on the common, such as he observed who went in a youth and emerged a gray-headed man; and yet a change had come to my eyes come over the scene—the town, and State, and country, greater than any that mere time could effect. I saw yet more distinctly the State in which I lived. I saw to what extent the people among whom I lived could be trusted as good neighbors and friends; that their friendship was for summer weather only; that they did not greatly propose to do right; that they were a distinct race from me by their prejudices and superstitions, as the Chinamen and Malays are that in their sacrifices to humanity they ran no risks, not even to their property; that after all they were not so noble but they treated the thief as he had treated them, and hoped, by a certain outward observance and a few prayers, and by walking in a particular straight through useless path from time to time, to save their souls. This may be to judge my neighbors harshly; for I believe that many of them are not aware that they have such an institution as the jail in their village.

It was formerly the custom in our village, when a poor debtor came out of jail, for his acquaintances to salute him, looking through their fingers, which were crossed to represent the jail window, "How do ye do?" My neighbors did not thus salute me, but first looked at me, and then at one another, as if I had returned from a long journey. I was put into jail as I was going to the shoemaker's to

One minute at Fast, Word Trios

get a shoe which was mender. When I was let out the next morning, I proceeded to finish my errand, and, having put on my mended shoe, joined a huckleberry party, who were impatient to put themselves under my conduct; and in half an hour—for the horse was soon tackled—was in the midst of a huckleberry field, on one of our highest hills, two miles off, and then the State was nowhere to be seen.

This is the whole history of "My Prisons."

I have never declined paying the highway tax, because I am as desirous of being a good neighbor as I am of being a bad subject; and as for supporting schools, I am doing my part to educate my fellow countrymen now. It is for no particular item in the tax bill that I refuse to pay it. I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually. I do not care to trace the course of my dollar, if I could, till it buys a man a musket to shoot one with—the dollar is innocent—but I am concerned to trace the effects of my allegiance. In fact, I quietly declare war with the State, after my fashion, though I will still make use and get what advantages of her I can, as is usual in such cases.

If others pay the tax which is demanded of me, from a sympathy with the State, they do but what they have already done in their own case, or rather they abet injustice to a greater extent than the State requires. If they pay the tax from a mistaken interest in the individual taxed, to save his property, or prevent his going to jail, it is because they have not considered wisely how far they let their private feelings interfere with the public good.

This, then is my position at present. But one cannot be too much on his guard in such a case, lest his actions be biased by obstinacy or an undue regard for the opinions of men. Let him see that he does only what belongs to himself and to the hour. I think sometimes, Why, this people mean well, they are only ignorant; they would do better if they knew how: why give your neighbors this pain to treat you as they are not inclined to? But I think again, This is no reason why I should do as they do, or permit others to suffer much greater pain of a different kind. Again, I sometimes say to myself, When many millions of men, without heat, without ill will, without personal feelings of any kind, demand of you a few shillings only, without the possibility, such is their constitution, of retracting or altering their present demand, and without the possibility, on your side, of appeal to any other millions, why expose yourself to this overwhelming brute force? You do not resist cold and hunger, the winds and the waves, thus obstinately; you quietly submit to a thousand similar necessities. You do not put your head into the fire. But just in proportion as I regard this as not wholly a brute force, but partly a human force, and

One minute at Very Slow, Word Quartets

consider that I have relations to those millions as to so many millions of men, and not of mere brute or inanimate things, I see that appeal is possible, first and instantaneously, from them to the Maker of them, and, secondly, from them to themselves. But if I put my head deliberately into the fire, there is no appeal to fire or to the Maker for fire, and I have only myself to blame. If I could convince myself that I have any right to be satisfied with men as they are, and to treat them accordingly, and not according, in some respects, to my requisitions and expectations of what they and I ought to be, then, like a good Mussulman and fatalist, I should endeavor to be satisfied with things as they are, and say it is the will of God. And, above all, there is this difference between resisting this and a purely brute or natural force, that I can resist this with some effect; but I cannot expect, like Orpheus, to change the nature of the rocks and trees and beasts.

I do not wish to quarrel with any man or nation. I do not wish to split hairs, to make fine distinctions, or set myself up as better than my neighbors. I seek rather, I may say, even an excuse for conforming to the laws of the land. I am but too ready to conform to

One minute at Fast, Word Trios

them. Indeed, I have reason to suspect myself on this head; and each year, as the tax-gatherer comes round, I find myself disposed to review the acts and position of the general and State governments, and the spirit of the people to discover a pretext for conformity.

"We must affect our country as our parents, And if at any time we alienate Out love or industry from doing it honor, We must respect effects and teach the soul Matter of conscience and religion, And not desire of rule or benefit."

I believe that the State will soon be able to take all my work of this sort out of my hands, and then I shall be no better patriot than my fellow-countrymen. Seen from a lower point of view, the Constitution, with all its faults, is very good; the law and the courts are very respectable; even this State and this American government are, in many respects, very admirable, and rare things, to be thankful for, such as a great many have described them; seen from a higher still, and the highest, who shall say what they are, or that they are worth looking at or thinking of at all?

However, the government does not concern me much, and I shall bestow the fewest possible thoughts on it. It is not many moments that I live under a government, even in this world. If a man is thought-free, fancy-free, imagination-free, that which is not never for a long time appearing to be to him, unwise rulers or reformers cannot fatally interrupt him.

I know that most men think differently from myself; but those whose lives are by profession devoted to the study of these or kindred subjects content me as little as any. Statesmen and legislators, standing so completely within the institution, never

distinctly and nakedly behold it. They speak of moving society, but have no resting-place without it. They may be men of a certain experience and discrimination, and have no doubt invented ingenious and even useful systems, for which we sincerely thank them; but all their wit and usefulness lie within certain not very wide limits. They are wont to forget that the world is not governed by policy and expediency. Webster never goes behind government, and so cannot speak with authority about it. His words are wisdom to those legislators who contemplate no essential reform in the existing government; but for thinkers, and those who legislate for all time, he never once glances at the subject. I know of those whose serene and wise speculations on this theme would soon reveal the limits of his mind's range and hospitality. Yet, compared with the cheap professions of most reformers, and the still cheaper wisdom and eloquence of politicians in general, his are almost the only sensible and valuable words, and we thank Heaven for him. Comparatively, he is always strong, original, and, above all, practical. Still, his quality is not wisdom, but prudence. The lawyer's truth is not Truth, but consistency or a consistent expediency. Truth is always in harmony with herself, and is not concerned chiefly to reveal the justice that may consist with wrong-doing. He well deserves to be called, as he has been called,

One minute at Normal, Word Trios

the Defender of the Constitution. There are really no blows to be given him but defensive ones. He is not a leader, but a follower. His leaders are the men of '87. "I have never made an effort," he says, "and never propose to make an effort; I have never countenanced an effort, and never mean to countenance an effort, to disturb the arrangement as originally made, by which various States came into the Union." Still thinking of the sanction which the Constitution gives to slavery, he says, "Because it was part of the original compact—let it stand." Notwithstanding his special acuteness and ability, he is unable to take a fact out of its merely political relations, and behold it as it lies absolutely to be disposed of by the intellect—what, for instance, it behooves a man to do here in America today with regard

to slavery—but ventures, or is driven, to make some such desperate answer to the following, while professing to speak absolutely, and as a private man—from which what new and singular of social duties might be inferred? “The manner,” says he, “in which the governments of the States where slavery exists are to regulate it is for their own consideration, under the responsibility to their constituents, to the general laws of propriety, humanity, and justice, and to God. Associations formed elsewhere, springing from a feeling of humanity, or any other cause, have nothing whatever to do with it. They have never received any encouragement from me and they never will.” [These extracts have been inserted since the lecture was read -HDT]

They who know of no purer sources of truth, who have traced up its stream no higher, stand, and wisely stand, by the Bible and the Constitution, and drink at it there with reverence and humanity; but they who behold where it comes trickling into this lake or that pool, gird up their loins once more, and continue their pilgrimage toward its fountainhead.

No man with a genius for legislation has appeared in America. They are rare in the history of the world. There are orators, politicians, and eloquent men, by the thousand; but the

One minute at Slow, Word Trios

speaker has not yet opened his mouth to speak who is capable of settling the much-vexed questions of the day. We love eloquence for its own sake, and not for any truth which it may utter, or any heroism it may inspire. Our legislators have not yet learned the comparative value of free trade and of freedom of union, and of rectitude, to a nation. They have no genius or talent for comparatively humble questions of taxation and finance, commerce and manufactures and agriculture. If we were left solely to the wordy wit of legislators in Congress for our guidance, uncorrected by the seasonable experience and the effectual complaints of the people, America would not long retain her rank among the nations. For eighteen hundred years, though perchance I have no right to say it, the New Testament

has been written; yet where is the legislator who has wisdom and practical talent enough to avail himself of the light which it sheds on the science of legislation.

The authority of government, even such as I am willing to submit to—for I will cheerfully obey those who know and can do better than I, and in many things even those who neither know nor can do so well—is still an impure one: to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it. The progress from an absolute to a limited monarchy, from a limited monarchy to a democracy, is progress toward a true respect for the

One minute at Very Slow, Word Trios

individual. Even the Chinese philosopher was wise enough to regard the individual as the basis of the empire. Is a democracy, such as we know it, the last improvement possible in government? Is it not possible to take a step further towards recognizing and organizing the rights of man? There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow men. A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which I have also imagined, but not yet anywhere seen.

Endnote

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