



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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How to Read Smarter & Faster

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True or False?

- Words are read one at a time
- False – we read for meaning, not for single words
- Reading faster than 500 words per minute is impossible
- False – we have the capacity to take in as many as six words at a time and as many as 24 words in a second
- If you read fast you are not able to comprehend what you are reading
- False – the faster reader will understand more of what is being expressed, will experience greater levels of concentration and will have time to review areas of special interest and relevance



True or False?

- High reading speeds mean lower levels of concentration
- False – the faster we read, the more impetus we gather and the more we concentrate
- Average reading speeds are natural, and therefore the best way to learn
- False – average reading speeds are not natural; they are simply the result of the limitations of the way we were taught to read



Increase Your Speed?

- An increase in the speed of reading leads to an automatic increase in comprehension. Your brain will start to organise words into meaningful groups as you read
- Reading slowly and carefully encourages your brain to read more and more slowly, with less and less comprehension
- Research has shown that, in 80% of cases when readers were not allowed to skip back or regress, they had taken in all the necessary information

This story begins long before I met Alfred. It begins when I was nine years old and first saw the Danes. It was the year 866 and I was not called Uhtred then, but Osbert, for I was my father's second son and it was the eldest who took the name Uhtred. My brother was seventeen then, tall and well-built, with our family's fair hair and my father's morose face.

The day I first saw the Danes we were riding along the sea shore with hawks on our wrists. There was my father, my father's brother, my brother, myself and a dozen retainers. It was autumn. The sea-cliffs were thick with the last growth of summer, there were seals on the rocks, and a host of seabirds wheeling and shrieking, too many to let the hawks off their leashes. We rode till we came to the criss-crossing shallows that rippled between our land and Lindisfarena, the Holy Island, and I remember staring across the water at the broken walls of the abbey. The Danes had plundered it, but that had been many years before I was born, and though the monks were living there again, the monastery had never regained its former glory.

I also remember that day as beautiful and perhaps it was. Perhaps it rained, but I do not think so. The sun shone, the seas were low, the breakers gentle and the world happy. The hawk's claws gripped my wrist through the leather sleeve, her hooded head twitching because she could hear the cries of the white birds. We had left the fortress in the forenoon, riding north, and though we carried hawks we did not ride to hunt, but rather so my father could make up his mind.

We ruled this land. My father, Baldorman Uhtred, was lord of everything south of the Tuede and north of the Tine, but we did have a king in Northumbria and his name, like mine, was Osbert. He lived to the south of us, rarely came north, and did not bother us, but now a man called Ælla wanted the throne and Ælla, who was an Ealdorman from the hills west of Eoferwic, had raised an

at nine years old, I believed any man called Osbert must be noble, good and brave. In truth Osbert was a dribbling fool, but he was the king, and my father was reluctant to abandon him. But Osbert had sent no gifts and had shown no respect, while Ælla had, and so my father worried. At a moment's notice we could lead a hundred and fifty men to war, all well armed, and given a month we could swell that force to over four hundred foemen, so whichever man we supported would be the king and grateful to us.

Or so we thought.

And then I saw them.

Three ships.

In my memory they slid from a bank of sea mist, and perhaps they did, but memory is a faulty thing and my other images of that day are of a clear, cloudless sky, so perhaps there was no mist, but it seems to me that one moment the sea was empty and the next there were three ships coming from the south.

Beautiful things. They appeared to rest weightless on the ocean, and when their oars dug into the waves they skimmed the water. Their prows and sterns curled high and were tipped with gilded beasts, serpents and dragons, and it seemed to me that on that far off summer's day the three boats danced on the water, propelled by the rise and fall of the silver wings of their oar banks. The sun flashed off the wet blades, splinters of light, then the oars dipped, were tugged and the beast-headed boats surged and I stared entranced.

'The devil's turds,' my father growled. He was not a very good Christian, but he was frightened enough at that moment to make the sign of the cross.

'And may the devil swallow them,' my uncle said. His name was Ælfric and he was a slender man; sly, dark and secretive.

The three boats had been rowing northwards, their square sails furled on their long yards, but when we turned back south to canter homewards on the sand so that our horses' manes tossed

like wind-blown spray and the hooded hawks mewed in alarm, the ships turned with us. Where the cliff had collapsed to leave a ramp of broken turf we rode inland, the horses heaving up the slope, and from there we galloped along the coastal path to our fortress.

To Bebbanburg. Bebba had been a queen in our land many years before, and she had given her name to my home, which is the dearest place in all the world. The fort stands on a high rock that curls out to sea. The waves beat on its eastern shore and break white on the rock's northern point, and a shallow sea-lake ripples along the western side between the fortress and the land. To reach Bebbanburg you must take the causeway to the south, a low strip of rock and sand that is guarded by a great wooden tower, the Low Gate, that is built on top of an earthen wall, and we thundered through the tower's arch, our horses white with sweat, and rode past the granaries, the smithy, the mews and the stables, all wooden buildings well thatched with rye straw, and so up the inner path to the High Gate which protected the peak of the rock that was surrounded by a wooden rampart encircling my father's hall. There we dismounted, letting slaves take our horses and hawks, and ran to the eastern rampart from where we gazed out to sea.

The three ships were now close to the islands where the puffins live and the seal-folk dance in winter. We watched them, and my stepmother, alarmed by the sound of hooves, came from the hall to join us on the rampart. 'The devil has opened his bowels,' my father greeted her.

'God and his saints preserve us,' Gytha said, crossing herself. I had never known my real mother who had been my father's second wife and, like his first, had died in childbirth, so both my brother and I, who were really half-brothers, had no mother, but I thought of Gytha as my mother and, on the whole, she was kind to me, kinder indeed than my father, who did not much like children. Gytha wanted me to be a priest, saying that my elder brother would inherit the land and become a warrior to protect it so I must find another life path. She had given my father two sons and a daughter, but none had lived beyond a year.

The three ships were coming closer now. It seemed they had come to inspect Bebbanburg, which did not worry us for the fortress was reckoned impregnable, and so the Danes could stare all they wanted. The nearest ship had twin banks of twelve oars each and, as the ship coasted a hundred paces offshore, a man leaped from the ship's side and ran down the nearer bank of oars, stepping from one shaft to the next like a dancer, and he did it wearing a mail shirt and holding a sword. We all prayed he would fall, but of course he did not. He had long fair hair, very long, and when he had pranced the full length of the oar bank he turned and ran the shafts again.

'She was trading at the mouth of the Tine a week ago,' Ælfric, my father's brother, said.

'You know that?'

'I saw her,' Ælfric said, 'I recognise that prow. See how there's a light-coloured strake on the bend?' He spat. 'She didn't have a dragon's head then.'

'They take the beast-heads off when they trade,' my father said. 'What were they buying?'

'Exchanging pelts for salt and dried fish. Said they were merchants from Haithabu.'

'They're merchants looking for a fight now,' my father said, and the Danes on the three ships were indeed challenging us by clashing their spears and swords against their painted shields, but there was little they could do against Bebbanburg and nothing we could do to hurt them, though my father ordered his wolf banner raised. The flag showed a snarling wolf's head and it was his standard in battle, but there was no wind and so the banner hung limp and its defiance was lost on the pagans who, after a while, became bored with taunting us, settled to their thwarts and rowed off to the south.

'We must pray,' my stepmother said. Gytha was much younger than my father. She was a small, plump woman with a mass of fair hair and a great reverence for Saint Cuthbert whom she worshipped because he had worked miracles. In the church beside the hall she kept an ivory comb that was said to have been Cuthbert's beard-comb, and perhaps it was.



Check Your Comprehension

- Have I got the general idea of what this passage was about?
- Is it sufficient for my present purpose?
- Am I missing some of the details? If so does it matter?
- Do I understand enough of what I have read, so far, to continue?



Notice any of the following habits?

- Find that your concentration wandered off?
- Hear the words in your head as you read (sub-vocalise)?
- Read one word at a time?
- Go back and re-read because you lost the meaning?
- Have problems remembering what it was about?
- Experience difficulty in maintaining your focus on the page?



Preview

'Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life's coming attractions.'
Albert Einstein

- Preview is like looking at the box cover of a jigsaw puzzle
- Preview gives you the big picture – so your mind reads differently – it is able to add the detail more easily and therefore helps you to read faster
- Preview helps our minds make accurate predictions and increases reading speed and comprehension

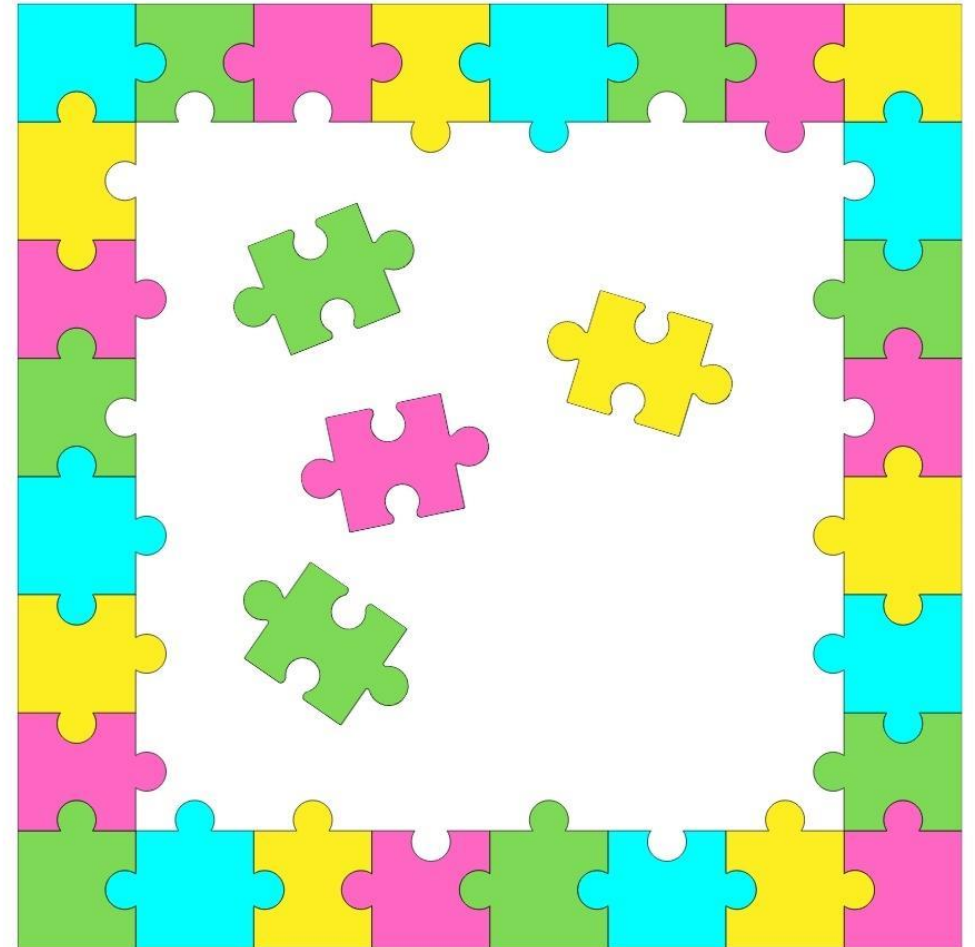


Motivation and Concentration

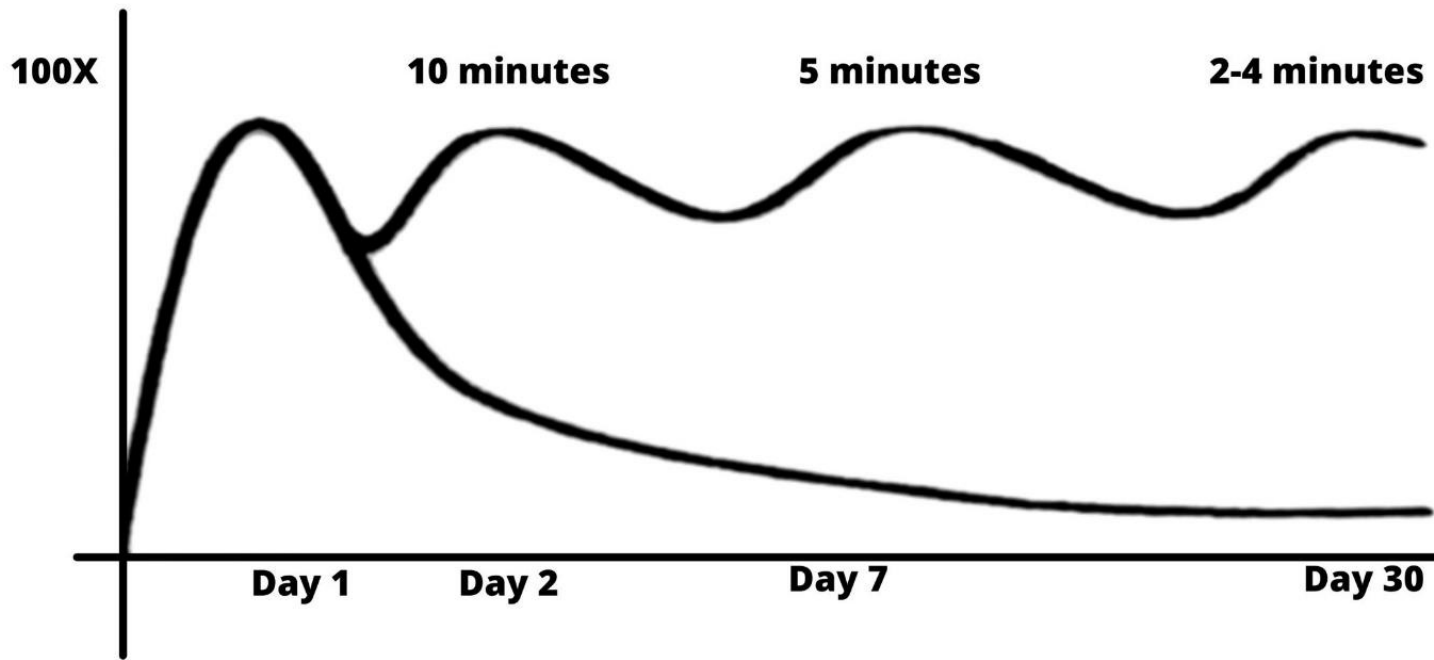
- Setting objectives is essential for comprehension, and will make working on your visual skills easier
- Read critically, with a purpose in mind. Set objectives, set goals, ask questions, why am I reading this?
- Use your power of anticipation
- Get involved. Read actively. Make notes
- Don't fight a short concentration span. Every 20 minutes or so have a small break

Preview

- Read a book like a jigsaw
- **Preview**
- The 80/20 technique
- 5 minute jotter
- Set goals (journey – menu)
- Key Words and Key Themes
- Read Actively
- Dual Reading
- Use a guide to read

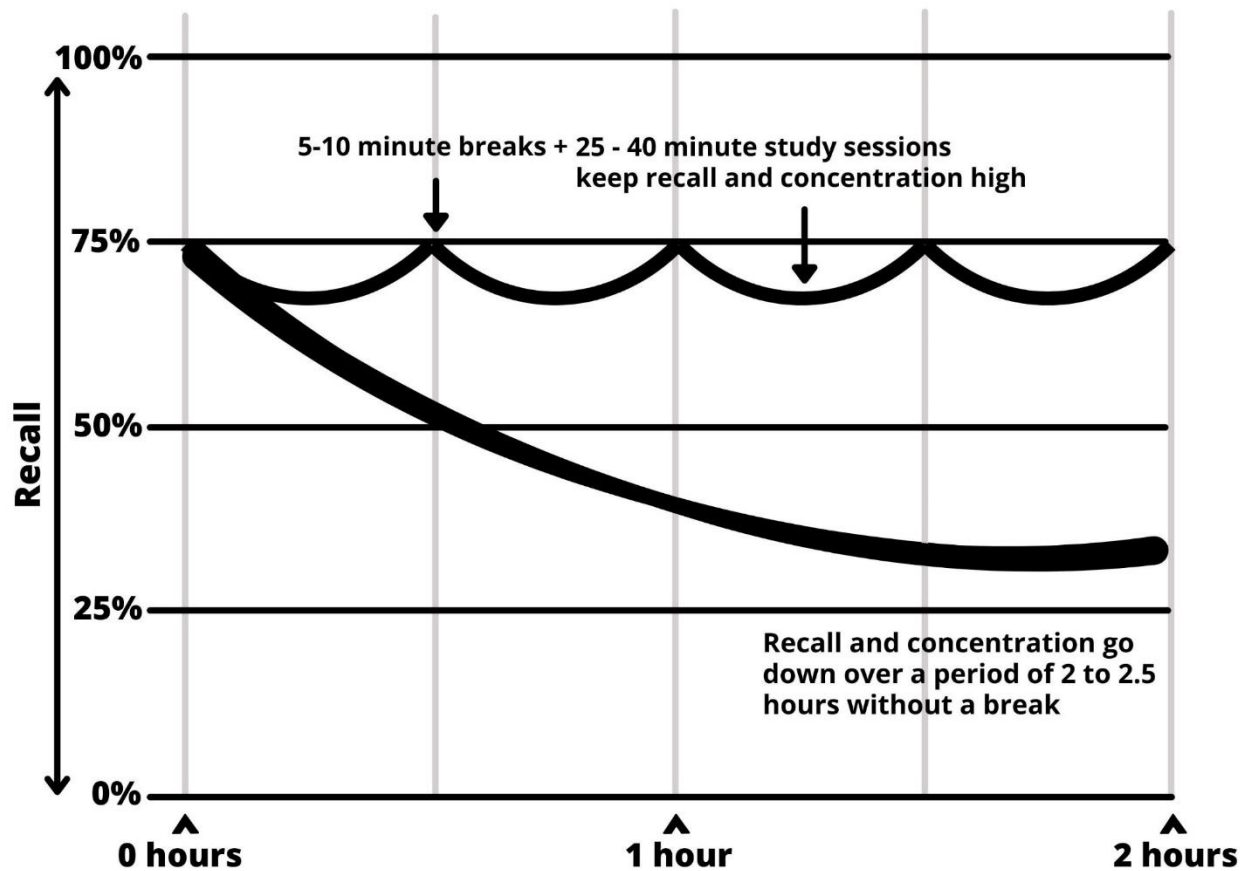


Review



Review is an excellent return on your investment. 5 minutes can potentially save you hours of time when you come to the exams.

Chunking time

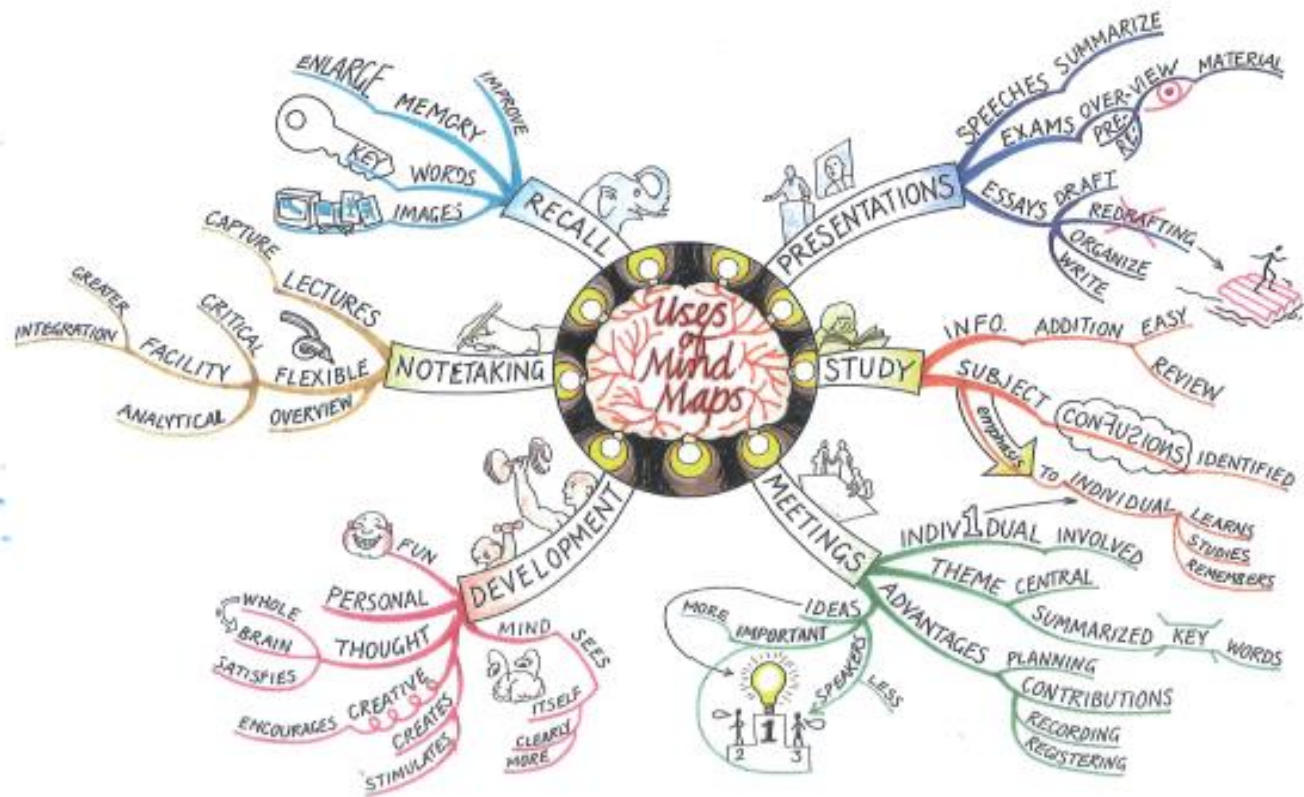


The **Pomodoro Technique** is a time management method developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s. The technique uses a timer to break down work into intervals, traditionally 25 minutes in length, separated by short breaks. [Pomodoro Technique](#)



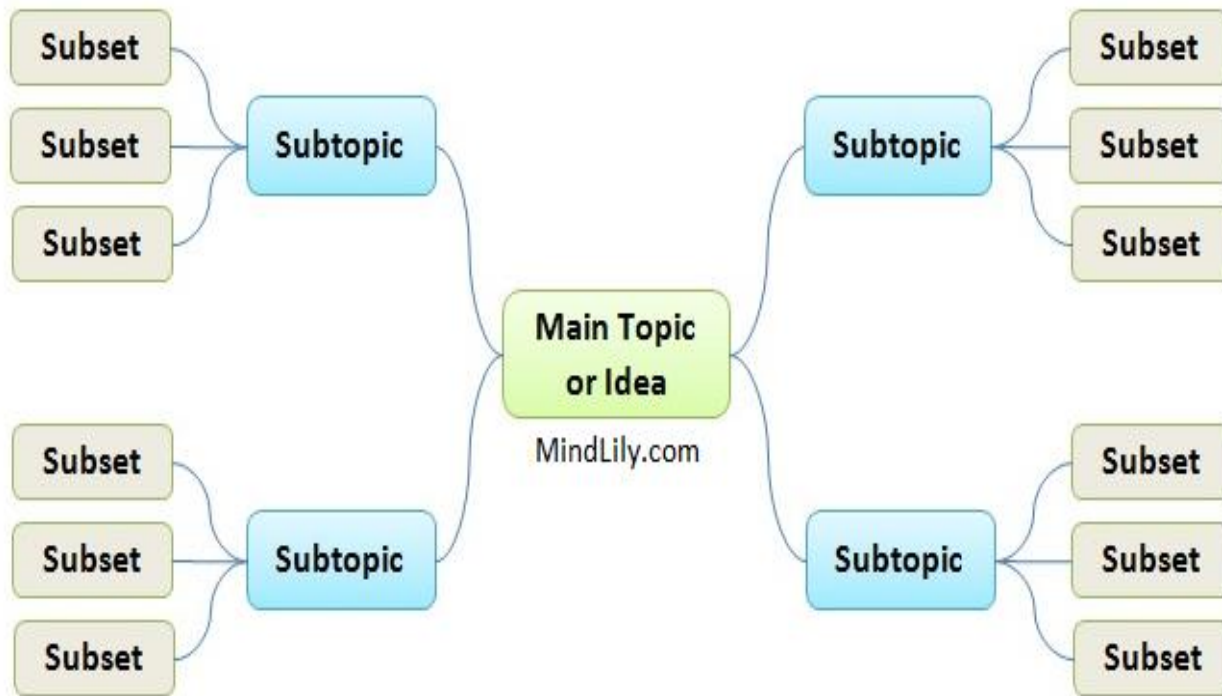
Key Words and Key Images

- ▶ Pictures linked to Words stimulate both sides of the brain and involve all your senses
- ▶ This embeds information into your memory
- ▶ Imagination & Association = Memory





Hand-drawn v Computerised Maps



Mind Master: Tony Buzan - iMindMap
program Edraw:

www.edrawsoft.com/download-mindmap.php

MindMapfree: mindmapfree.com

www.matchware.com MindView

<https://www.inspiration-at.com/>

www.mindmeister.com

www.mindmup.com



Sub-vocalisation

- If you were asked to vocalise everything you saw – how long would that take? It would slow you down considerably
- It's the same with reading, our pace is reduced
- Keeping your mouth closed when reading can help and increasing your reading speed
- However for dyslexic readers, sub-vocalising can reinforce what is being read

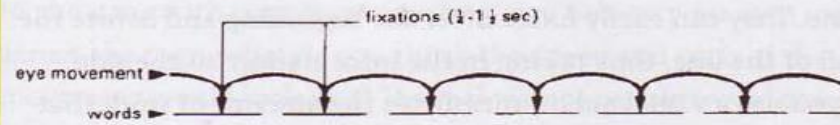


Figure A: Diagram representing the stop-and-start movement or 'jumps' of the eyes during the reading process.

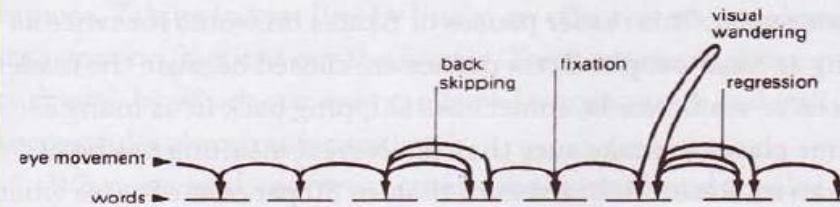


Figure B: Diagram showing poor reading habits of a slow reader: one word read at a time, with unconscious back-skipping, visual wanderings and conscious regressions.

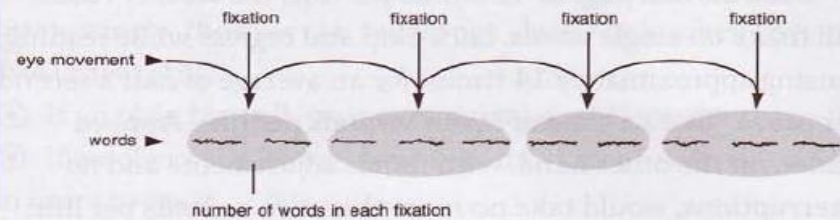


Figure C: Diagram showing eye movements of a better and more efficient reader. More words are taken in at each fixation, and back-skipping, regression and visual wandering are reduced.

Source: Buzan,T.(2011)

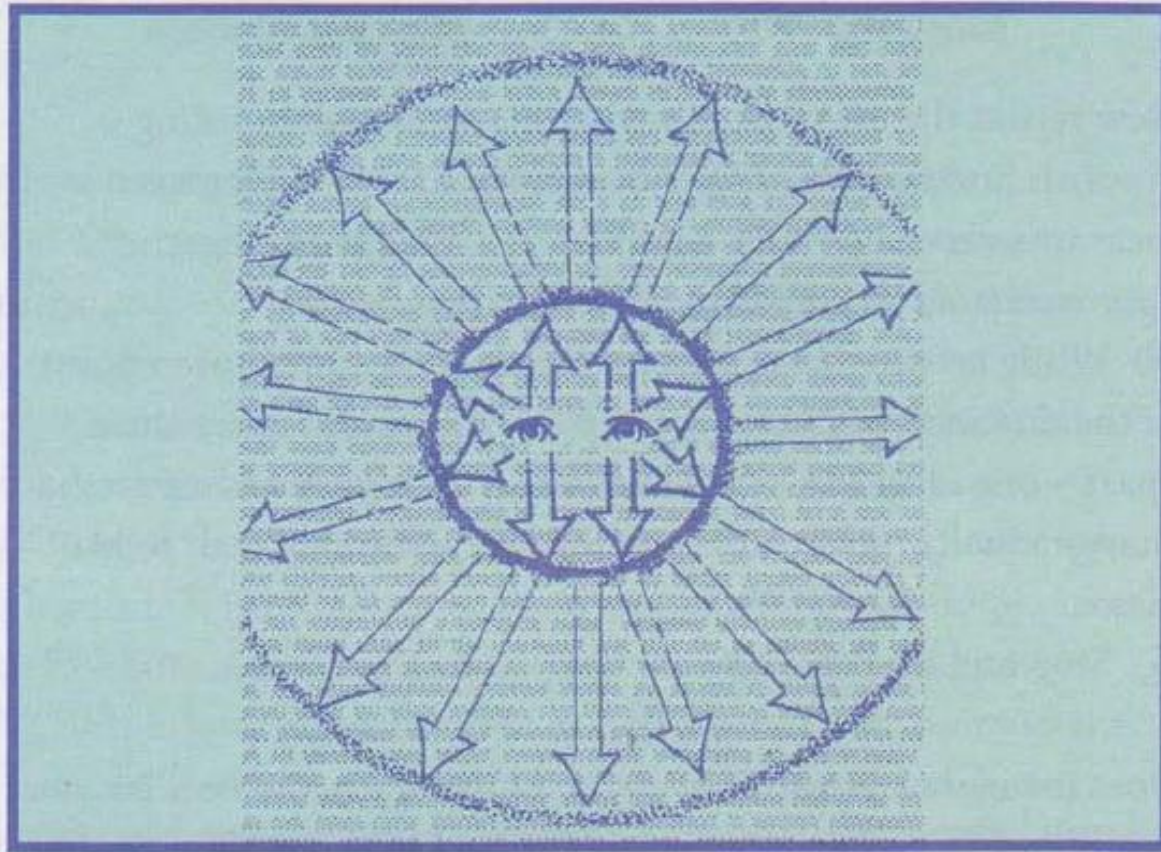


Regression or Back-skipping

- Reduce fixations to about 3 per line, no regression
- Smoother eye movements = faster reading
- Speed = less regression
- Speed = more concentration
- Break these habits by increasing reading speed
- Leads to better comprehension and encourages anticipation
- Regression breaks flow, speed reading is all about flow, syncing the pace of your eyes to the rhythm of your mind



Peripheral Vision



Fields of vision. The inner circled area shows the area of clear vision available to the speed reader when the eye/brain system is used properly. The outer circle shows the peripheral vision also available.

The mind processes information from the sides 25% faster than it does from direct vision

Source: Buzan,T.(2011)



Peripheral Vision



Source: Buzan,T.(2011)



Schultz Table

6	10	23	5	7
16	14	21	18	12
24	17	1	25	15
19	13	20	3	8
22	4	2	9	11



Raining Letters

S	E	E	EXN	O	S	G
S	C	Z	CTT	U	T	O
P	R	G	RZH	T	E	E
K	E	V	ESH	I	S	R
J	O	H	ORE	C	A	M
H	O	I	ONT	E	S	R
G	U	T	UVH	E	A	I
G	R	S	RAN	I	R	R
G	R	T	RIN	N	O	N
G	I	C	ITE	E	I	A
C	L	T	LOX	N	E	K
C	H	B	HES	I	C	U
C	H	N	HMJ	J	A	I
B	L	D	LRY	N	E	N
A	R	T	RNE	E	C	T
A	L	M	LLN	N	O	O
T	S	W	SNR	E	D	O
S	W	Z	WAR	I	V	L



Centred Text

The trees are in their autumn beauty, the woodland paths are dry
Under the October twilight, the water mirrors a still sky
Upon the brimming water among the stones, are nine and fifty swans

The nineteenth Autumn has come upon me since I first made my count
I saw, before I had well finished, all suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings, upon their clamorous wings

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures, and now my heart is sore
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight, the first time on this shore
The bell-beat of their wings above my head, trod with a lighter tread

Unwearied still, lover by lover, they paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air; their hearts have not grown old
Passion or conquest, wander where they will, Attend upon them still

But now they drift on the still water; mysterious, beautiful
Among what rushes will they build, by what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes, when I awake someday, to find they have flown away

The Wild Swans at
Coole. W.B.Yeats



Peripheral Vision

- We use peripheral vision in every day life
- We should be able to see and understand 5 average words in a group
- A tip - try to look at the spaces between the words as it forces the mind to group words
- Then look at the spaces between 2 words, then 3 words
- Eventually look at just 2 spaces per line – middle left and middle right



Peripheral Vision

- Don't read the margins
- Some advance to one space per line in the middle of the page
- Faster speeds = higher comprehension
- Expand your peripheral vision by holding the textbook further away from your eyes
- Peripheral vision increases your ability to read and see with your entire brain



Using a guide

Not quite a circle



Figure 7.4 - Unguided eye movements

More like a circle

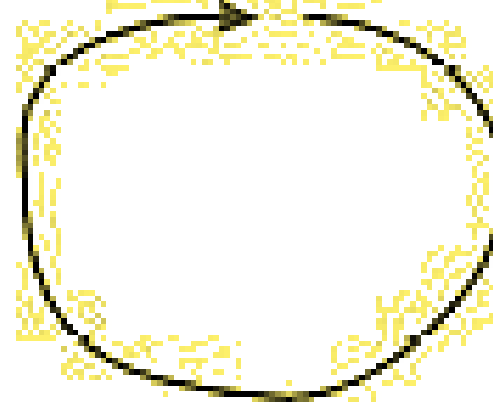


Figure 7.5 - Guided eye movements

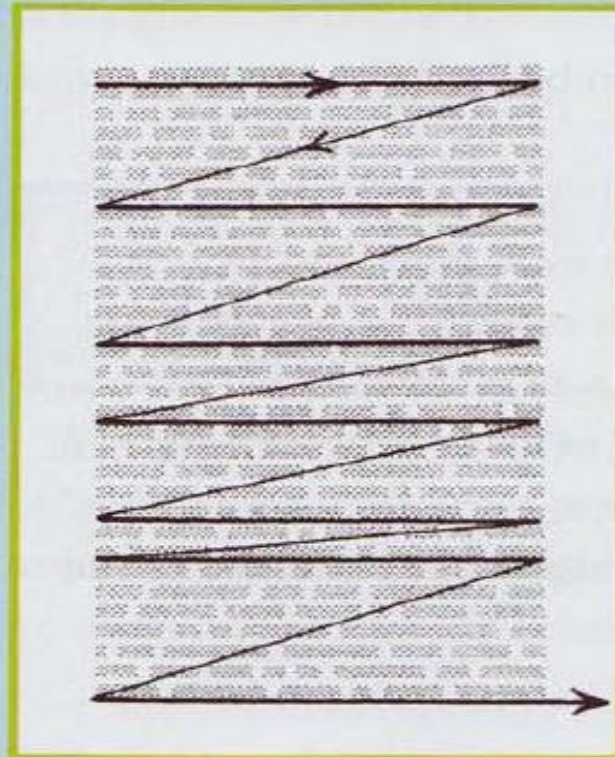


Using a Guide

- Use a finger, pencil or chopstick as a guide
- Using a text you are familiar with, first practice fast without worrying if you understand or not
- Practice at a normal speed
- The brain then becomes accustomed to faster reading speeds
- Practice on all types of material
- Understanding and comprehension will come naturally



1 The double-line sweep involves your eyes taking in two lines of text at a time. It is a technique that combines both vertical and horizontal vision (and a skill applied by those studying music).



2 The variable sweep takes the same approach as the double-line sweep, but allows you to take in the number of lines that you can cope with at one time.



Visualisation

Stephen Pinker (and authority on stylish writing) points out, “a third of our brains [are] dedicated to vision... Many experiments have shown that readers understand and remember material far better when it is expressed in concrete language that allows them to form visual images” (2015, p. 72)

- Reading and visualisation combined = high speed and comprehension
- To practice visualisation, start with simple words
- When you see the word house, picture in your mind a house. See Picture Dictionary in Immersive Reader.
- Visualisation is strongly linked to memory



Vocabulary

- Introduce one new word into your vocabulary every day
- Highlight words you don't know and look them up at the end so you don't disturb your reading flow
- Increasing your vocabulary will improve your overall intellect
- Speed reading ability will accelerate with an increased ability to spot keywords/concepts + fewer problems understanding the text
- More reading + varied sources = easier vocabulary recognition (pattern recognition)



To Re-cap

- Apply motivation
- Follow objectives
- Avoid regression
- Group the words
- Use a guide
- Try to maintain a rhythm as you read
- Change speeds for different parts of the text
- Learning a new skill takes time and practice, old habits die hard
- Practice every day for 5 minutes
- It is better to read 2-3 x at a good speed than once slowly



References

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