

I'm not a bot





























1 Make sure you understand the type of text you have. Ask yourself: What type of work am I reading? Is it information-based, like a newspaper, textbook, or manual? Or is it more creative/artistic, like a novel or short story? This matters![1] For instance, if you're reading to follow instructions (like a recipe or assembly guide), you'll need to understand the exact meaning of each step. If you're reading a text that has lots of information, like a textbook, then you'll be reading most of all for new information on things you don't know or understand. 2 Decide on the purpose of your reading. The reason why you're reading has an impact on how you read. For instance, reading a novel for a class can be different than reading a novel for pleasure, since you'll be expected to understand and remember the text rather than just enjoy the experience of reading it. Ask yourself: What am I reading for?[2] If you're reading to gain information (for instance, to meet work or school requirements), you'll probably want to try extensive techniques. If you're reading to practice pronunciation, learn vocabulary, or study grammar, you'll probably want to try intensive techniques. Advertisement 3 Scan your reading before you begin. Whatever the purpose of your reading is, taking a few minutes to look the piece over is very helpful. Check and see how the work is structured and presented. These are easy ways to increase your understanding.[3] Does the work have a title? Is there a table of contents you can scan? Is the work divided into separate sections? Does the work have any "extras," like bolded key words, illustrations, or graphs? Advertisement 1 Read intensively if you want to practice the fundamentals and learn vocabulary. Intensive reading is focused more on individual details of what you're reading. If you want to practice pronunciation, study grammar, or learn vocabulary, you'll want to read more slowly and focus more on individual words and sentences.[4] 2 Look for just the gist of text in reading. For intensive reading, it's not always important to worry about what something means in a deep way. Just trying to get a general sense of what the reading is about. As you read, you'll focus more on details like spelling, pronunciation, and the rhythm of sentences.[5] Don't get too caught up in parts you don't fully understand. If you can summarize the main point of what you're reading, then you're doing ok. 3 Read out loud. This can improve your reading skills because it makes you be involved with the text in two ways: with your eyes, as you look at the words, and with your ears, as you listen to them. Reading out loud is also key if you're trying to practice pronunciation.[6] 4 Try to guess the meaning of any new words. When you come to a word you don't know, try not to reach for the dictionary right away. Instead, try to guess the meaning of the word based on the other words around it (the context). For example, say you read the following sentence and wanted to know what "pessimist" means: My mother is always happy and optimistic, the total opposite of my brother, the pessimist. From the sentence, you can gather that "pessimist" means the opposite of happy: being moody and angry. 5 Write down new words you want to learn. If you come to any words that you can't figure out, write them down and look up their meaning in a good dictionary. That way, you can study the words later, too.[7] 6 Read as often as you can. The more you read, the easier it becomes. Practicing for at least 15 to 30 minutes a day, every day, will make a big difference. Read whatever interests you, if you're just trying to improve your basic skill. Rereading things you've already gone through can build your confidence. EXPERT TIP Soren Rosier, PhD Teacher & Education Researcher Soren Rosier is an Education Expert based in Palo Alto, CA. He is the founder of PeerTeach, a platform that empowers students to grow their leadership, confidence, and love of math through AI-powered peer tutoring. Additionally, he is an instructor at the Stanford Graduate School of Education, where he teaches courses on designing impactful tools for learning. Before beginning his PhD, he taught middle school in Oakland, developed teacher training programs, and evaluated the efficacy of popular ed tech products at SRJ International. He received his undergraduate degree from Harvard University and a PhD in Learning Sciences & Technology Design at Stanford University. Be thoughtful about the books you choose to read. PhD candidate and former teacher Soren Rosier says: "The best thing to do to get better at reading is to read a lot independently. Look for books that you're interested in, and that are also at your reading level. If you're reading texts that are too hard and you have to struggle through them, then you're not going to enjoy reading." Advertisement 1 Try extensive reading if you're looking for understanding. Extensive reading works when you're trying to determine the meaning of what you're reading. This technique focuses on the overall picture. It's best for things like studying a textbook, reading a newspaper article for information, or reading a book for school.[8] 2 Take notes on your reading. If you want to read to understand something on a deeper level, like studying a textbook, it helps to read more actively. Keep a notebook out and make notes on important things you notice as you read.[9] For instance, you can make bullet points to summarize every time you come to a major idea. If there are key terms or dates in whatever you're reading, make a note of those as well. If there are parts you don't understand, write down the questions you have and come back to them later. 3 Annotate your reading. If you're able to write in or mark up whatever it is you're reading, this can also help increase your understanding. For instance, you can underline or highlight important passages. You could also try things like circling key terms and writing notes in the margins.[10] 4 Review what you're reading by summarizing it. Every so often, stop and write a few sentences in your notes to summarize what you've read so far. Putting the main ideas into your own words and writing them out is a way of checking that you understand what you're reading. Going back over the material also helps you remember what you've read.[11] If you have trouble summarizing or remembering any part of what you're reading, you can also try writing out a summary in an outline form, rather than full sentences. 5 Identify key words and concepts. When you encounter a word or concept that seems essential to a text's meaning, make a note of it. If you are reading a textbook, these might even be set apart in bold print, or in a separate vocabulary section. You can write the words or concepts down to study them later, or even make a set of flash cards.[12] If you come across a word or concept that seems important but is not clearly defined in the text, look up its meaning in a dictionary or encyclopedia (either online or print). If you see certain words being used over and over again, that's another sign that they're important for what you're reading and worth looking up. Advertisement 1 Read with a friend. Getting through a text can be easier and more fun when you're not doing it alone. For instance, you can try reading the same section of a text as your partner, then talking about it to make sure you both understood the main ideas. You can also share your thoughts and ideas to help you practice and know what you are reading.[13] To improve reading aloud you can even pair yourself with someone you feel is a better reader. While your partner is reading, listen to your pronunciation, speed, and rhythm. Take a turn yourself, then ask for feedback. 2 Choose the right reading environment. If you really want to concentrate on your reading, step away from television, music, phones, computers, and chatty people. These distractions make it hard to focus, dragging out reading and causing frustration. Try reading in a quiet, well-lit place with a desk and comfortable chair, if you can. 3 Use a pointer while reading if you have trouble focusing on the page. Take a bookmark, ruler, or small piece of paper and set it on the page you want to read. Slide it down so you can only read one line of text, then move it down to read the next line, and so on. Doing this can make reading feel more manageable. 4 Read something you're interested in, if you have a choice. It's no surprise that you'll be more motivated to read a text that you genuinely care about. If you're given the chance to select books or other things to read for yourself, seek out topics you are interested in. [14] 5 Track your progress. Keep records, like a list of books or articles you've gone through, and how many minutes you read each day. Seeing how much you've accomplished over time can encourage you to keep making progress.[15] Advertisement Add New Question Question How do I stop skipping words? Don't rush while you are reading. Be calm and concentrate. Question Why is it easier for me to read a novel than a textbook? Novels are easier to read for almost everyone. They are made to be pleasant and entertaining, whereas textbooks are made mainly to teach you information. Learning takes more effort than entertainment. Question I hardly understand what I am reading and easily forget. I also feel tired when reading. What can I do? It's very common to not understand what you are reading. Give the reading your undivided attention. When you read concepts over and over again, it will enable you get detailed information you need. Write notes in your own words to clarify your understanding. Read a lot to improve your reading skills, including fiction which will usually reassure you that you have no problems understanding, it's more about the difficulty level in textbooks and scientific papers. Have breaks during reading, to give your eyes and mind a rest. Learn to evaluate yourself after every reading, to go over what you did and didn't understand. Most of all, don't feel you have to understand things immediately -- for most people that is unrealistic and it is in the struggle to grasp the meaning that real gains are made and even new insights. See more answers Ask a Question Advertisement The advice in this section is based on the lived experiences of wikiHow readers like you. If you have a helpful tip you'd like to share on wikiHow, please submit it in the field below. Try to avoid listening to music or putting the TV on in the background while you read. It can make it harder to track what's happening in the book if you have too much going on noise-wise. Try reading a little bit before bed every night. Not only is it a good way to improve your reading skills, but you might have some fun dreams about whatever you're read! If you're new to reading, choose books with fun pictures! It really makes the process more enjoyable. Whenever you come across a word you don't recognize, stop and look it up. Co-authored by: Teacher & Education Researcher This article was co-authored by Soren Rosier, PhD. Soren Rosier is an Education Expert based in Palo Alto, CA. He is the founder of PeerTeach, a platform that empowers students to grow their leadership, confidence, and love of math through AI-powered peer tutoring. Additionally, he is an instructor at the Stanford Graduate School of Education, where he teaches courses on designing impactful tools for learning. Before beginning his PhD, he taught middle school in Oakland, developed teacher training programs, and evaluated the efficacy of popular ed tech products at SRJ International. He received his undergraduate degree from Harvard University and a PhD in Learning Sciences & Technology Design at Stanford University. This article has been viewed 1,747,021 times. Co-authors: 152 Updated: March 19, 2025 Views: 1,747,021 Categories: Improving Reading Skills Print Send fan mail to authors Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 1,747,021 times. "All of it was very descriptive, and each method was written really well. Each of the ways that were meant to help improve reading skills actually work. I tried all of them, and each one of them is very effective. This information will help a lot of people."..." more Share your story Do you have intermediate level English reading skills? Do you feel you need to improve and practice English vocabulary? Would you like to practice English listening skills at the same time as reading a good story? If yes, the stories in the Practice English and Reading course are a good way for you to practice English listening, vocabulary, and reading skills. The stories in the Practice English and Reading course originally came from news reports. Some stories contain a "Full Story" which uses a higher reading level, close to the original language. The "Basic Story" uses simple sentences and vocabulary to make the same story easier to understand. The news stories and activities are organized around these eleven topic areas: Family Good Places Health and Safety Housing Law and Government Money Nature School Science and Technology Services Working Each story contains a reading, vocabulary practice, comprehension questions, and a writing activity. You can complete the activities in any order that you want, depending on your interests and learning goals. On the story page, you'll find the text and a Listen button. When you click the Listen button you can read along with the text while you listen to a native speaker read the story. Listen and read several times to correct the sound of language with the spelling of the words. By using this you can also improve and practice English pronunciation and listening skills. In the Learn New Words activity, you will practice 10 words from the reading. You'll see the definition of the word as it is used in the context of the context behind the words, how subtle language and vocabulary usage can impact emotion and meaning behind the text, and how the text comes together as a larger, coherent whole. For instance, let's look at the first line from Jane Austen's novel, Pride and Prejudice: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." Now, a completely literal interpretation of the text, just based on word-meaning, would have us believe that 'all rich men want wives.' But the context, word choice, and phrasing of the text actually belie that interpretation. By using the phrases "universally acknowledged" and "must be in want of" (emphasis ours), the text is conveying a subtle sarcasm to the words. Instead of it being an actual truth that 'rich men want wives', this one sentence instantly tells us that we're reading about a society preoccupied with marriage, while also implying that the opening statement is something people in that society may believe, but that isn't necessarily true. In just a few short words, Austen conveys several ideas to the reader about one of the main themes of the story, the setting, and what the culture and people are like. And she does so all the while seeming to contradict the literal words of the piece. Without practice in reading comprehension, nuances like these can become lost. And so it can happen that someone may find themselves reading, but not truly comprehending the full meaning of a text. As you can see, reading comprehension involves many processes happening in your brain at once, and thus it can be easy for some aspects of a text to get lost in the middle. But the good news for anyone who struggles is that reading comprehension is a skill just like any other. It must be learned through practice, focus, and diligence, but it absolutely CAN be learned. Why Reading Comprehension Is Important Proper reading comprehension can be difficult, so why bother? Even though learning how to properly read and comprehend texts is a complicated process, it is a necessary skill to master, both for work and for pleasure. You will need to know how to read and interpret all kinds of different texts—both on the basic, literal level and on a more in-depth level—throughout your schooling, in college, and in the working world (as well as in your recreation time!). If we think about "reading" just as a literal or surface understanding of a piece and "reading comprehension" as the complete understanding, a person can only get by in the world on pure "reading" for so long. Reading comprehension is essential for many significant aspects of daily life, such as: Reading, understanding, and analyzing literature in your English classes Reading and understanding texts from your other class subjects, such as history, math, or science Doing well on both the written and math sections of the SAT (or all five sections of the ACT) Understanding and engaging with current events presented in written form, such as news reports Properly understanding and responding to any and all other workplace correspondence, such as essays, reports, memos, and analyses Simply taking pleasure in written work on your own leisure time Just like with any goal or skill, we can master reading comprehension one step at a time. How to Improve Reading Comprehension: 3 Steps Because reading comprehension is a skill that improves like any other, you can improve your understanding with practice and a game plan. Dedicate yourself to engaging in a combination of both "guided" and "relaxed" reading practice for at least two to three hours a week. Guided practice will involve structure and focused attention, like learning new vocabulary words and testing yourself on them, while relaxed practice will involve merely letting yourself read and enjoy reading without pressure for at least one to two hours a week. (Note: if you already read for pleasure, add at least one more hour of pleasure-reading per week.) By combining reading-for-studying and reading-for-pleasure, you'll be able to improve your reading skill without relegating reading time to the realm of "work" alone. Reading is a huge part of our daily lives, and improving your comprehension should never come at the cost of depriving yourself of the pleasure of the activity. So what are some of the first steps for improving your reading comprehension level? Step 1: Understand and Reevaluate How You're Currently Reading Before you can improve your reading comprehension, you must first understand how you're currently reading, and what your limitations are. Start by selecting excerpts from different texts with which you are unfamiliar—text books, essays, novels, news reports, or any kind of text you find particularly strange to understand. As you read, see if you can notice when your attention, energy, or comprehension of the material begins to flag. If your comprehension or concentration tends to lag after a period of time, start to slowly build up your stamina. For instance, if you continually lose focus at the 20 minute mark every time you read, acknowledge this and push yourself to slowly increase that time, rather than trying to sit and concentrate on reading for an hour or two at a stretch. Begin by reading for your maximum amount of focused time (in this case, twenty minutes), then give yourself a break. Next time, try for 22 minutes. Once you've mastered that, try for 25 and see if you can still maintain focus. If you can, then try for thirty. If you find that your concentration or comprehension starts to lag again, take a step back on your timing before pushing yourself for more. Improvement comes with time, and it'll only cause frustration if you try to rush it all at once. Alternatively, you may find that your issues with reading comprehension have less to do with the time spent reading than with the source material itself. Perhaps you struggle to comprehend the essential elements of a text, the context of a piece, character arcs or motivation, books or textbooks with densely packed information, or material that is heavily symbolic. If this is the case, then be sure to follow the tips below to improve these areas of reading comprehension weakness. Improving your reading comprehension level takes time and practice, but understanding where your strengths and weaknesses stand now is the first step towards progress. Step 2: Improve Your Vocabulary Reading and comprehension rely on a combination of vocabulary, context, and the interaction of words. So you must be able to understand each moving piece before you can understand the text as a whole. If you struggle to understand specific vocabulary, it's sometimes possible to pick up meaning through context clues (how the words are used in the sentence or in the passage), but it's always a good idea to look up the definitions of words with which you aren't familiar. As you read, make sure to keep a running list of new words you don't really know, and make a habit of looking up the definitions of new words as you go. You can keep them organized with plastic baggies or rubber bands, or you can get an organizer. Alternatively, try these easy-clip flashcards that include binder clips. Though we strongly recommend making your own flashcards, you can also buy pre-made ones—the best option is Barron's 1100 Words You Need to Know, a series of exercises to master key words and idioms. In order to retain your vocabulary knowledge, you must employ a combination of practiced memorization (like studying your flashcards) and make a point of using these new words in your verbal and written communication. Guided vocabulary practice like this will give you access to new words and their meanings as well as allow you to properly retain them. Step 3: Read for Pleasure The best way to improve your reading comprehension level is through practice. And the best way to practice is to have fun with it! Make reading a fun activity, at least on occasion, rather than a constant chore. This will motivate you to engage with the text and embrace the activity as part of your daily life (rather than just your study/work life). As you practice and truly engage with your reading material, improvement will come naturally. Begin by reading texts that are slightly below your age and grade level (especially if reading is frustrating or difficult for you). This will take pressure off of you and allow you to relax and enjoy the story. Here are some fun, easy reads that we recommend to get you started: Once you feel more comfortable reading and practicing your comprehension strategies (tips in the next section), go ahead and allow yourself to read at whatever reading or age level you feel like. Even if you feel that you don't understand some of the text right now—or even a large portion of it!—if you enjoy yourself and give it your best shot, you'll find that your reading comprehension levels will improve over time. Ultimately, reading should be a fun and functional activity. So try to keep your reading exercises balanced between work and pleasure. 5 Reading Comprehension Tips to Improve Your Reading Skills 1. Set Reading Goals: Determine what you want to achieve with your reading and set specific goals. 2. Practice Regularly: Make reading a daily habit to build and maintain your skills. 3. Expand Your Vocabulary: Learn new words and their meanings to improve comprehension. 4. Use Reading Techniques: Apply different reading techniques, such as skimming and scanning, to suit your purpose. 5. Take Notes: Jot down important points and summaries to reinforce your understanding. 6. Discuss What You Read: Engage in discussions about your reading to deepen your comprehension and gain new perspectives. 7. Read Diverse Materials: Explore different genres and types of texts to broaden your reading experience. Conclusion Improving your Reading Skills requires dedication and practice. By understanding various reading techniques and applying practical strategies, you can enhance your efficiency and enjoyment. So, grab a book, set your goals, and start your journey to becoming a masterful reader today! Are you facing creative writing challenges? Handle these challenges with ease in our Creative Writing Course - Sign up now! 1 Make sure you understand the type of text you have. Ask yourself: What type of work am I reading? Is it information-based, like a newspaper, textbook, or manual? Or is it more creative/artistic, like a novel or short story? This matters![1] For instance, if you're reading to follow instructions (like a recipe or assembly guide), you'll need to understand the exact meaning of each step. If you're reading a text that has lots of information, like a textbook, then you'll be reading most of all for new information on things you don't know or understand. 2 Decide on the purpose of your reading. The reason why you're reading has an impact on how you read. For instance, reading a novel for a class can be different than reading a novel for pleasure, since you'll be expected to understand and remember the text rather than just enjoy the experience of reading it. Ask yourself: What am I reading for?[2] If you're reading to gain information (for instance, to meet work or school requirements), you'll probably want to try extensive techniques. If you're reading to practice pronunciation, learn vocabulary, or study grammar, you'll probably want to try intensive techniques. Advertisement 3 Scan your reading before you begin. Whatever the purpose of your reading is, taking a few minutes to look the piece over is very helpful. Check and see how the work is structured and presented. These are easy ways to increase your understanding.[3] Does the work have a title? Is there a table of contents you can scan? Is the work divided into separate sections? Does the work have any "extras," like bolded key words, illustrations, or graphs? Advertisement 1 Read intensively if you want to practice the fundamentals and learn vocabulary. Intensive reading is focused more on individual details of what you're reading. 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EXPERT TIP Soren Rosier, PhD Teacher & Education Researcher Soren Rosier is an Education Expert based in Palo Alto, CA. He is the founder of PeerTeach, a platform that empowers students to grow their leadership, confidence, and love of math through AI-powered peer tutoring. Additionally, he is an instructor at the Stanford Graduate School of Education, where he teaches courses on designing impactful tools for learning. Before beginning his PhD, he taught middle school in Oakland, developed teacher training programs, and evaluated the efficacy of popular ed tech products at SRJ International. He received his undergraduate degree from Harvard University and a PhD in Learning Sciences & Technology Design at Stanford University. Be thoughtful about the books you choose to read. PhD candidate and former teacher Soren Rosier says: "The best thing to do to get better at reading is to read a lot independently. Look for books that you're interested in, and that are also at your reading level. If you're reading texts that are too hard and you have to struggle through them, then you're not going to enjoy reading." Advertisement 1 Try extensive reading if you're looking for understanding. Extensive reading works when you're trying to determine the meaning of what you're reading. This technique focuses on the overall picture. It's best for things like studying a textbook, reading a newspaper article for information, or reading a book for school.[8] 2 Take notes on your reading. If you want to read to understand something on a deeper level, like studying a textbook, it helps to read more actively. Keep a notebook out and make notes on important things you notice as you read.[9] For instance, you can make bullet points to summarize every time you come to a major idea. If there are key terms or dates in whatever you're reading, make a note of those as well. 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You can also share your thoughts and ideas to help you practice and know what you are reading.[13] To improve reading aloud you can even pair yourself with someone you feel is a better reader. While your partner is reading, listen to your pronunciation, speed, and rhythm. Take a turn yourself, then ask for feedback. 2 Choose the right reading environment. If you really want to concentrate on your reading, step away from television, music, phones, computers, and chatty people. These distractions make it hard to focus, dragging out reading and causing frustration. Try reading in a quiet, well-lit place with a desk and comfortable chair, if you can. 3 Use a pointer while reading if you have trouble focusing on the page. Take a bookmark, ruler, or small piece of paper and set it on the page you want to read. Slide it down so you can only read one line of text, then move it down to read the next line, and so on. Doing this can make reading feel more manageable. 4 Read something you're interested in, if you have a choice. It's no surprise that you'll be more motivated to read a text that you genuinely care about. If you're given the chance to select books or other things to read for yourself, seek out topics you are interested in. [14] 5 Track your progress. Keep records, like a list of books or articles you've gone through, and how many minutes you read each day. Seeing how much you've accomplished over time can encourage you to keep making progress.[15] Advertisement Add New Question Question How do I stop skipping words? Don't rush while you are reading. Be calm and concentrate. Question Why is it easier for me to read a novel than a textbook? Novels are easier to read for almost everyone. They are made to be pleasant and entertaining, whereas textbooks are made mainly to teach you information. Learning takes more effort than entertainment. Question I hardly understand what I am reading and easily forget. I also feel tired when reading. What can I do? It's very common to not understand what you are reading. Give the reading your undivided attention. When you read concepts over and over again, it will enable you get detailed information you need. Write notes in your own words to clarify your understanding. Read a lot to improve your reading skills, including fiction which will usually reassure you that you have no problems understanding, it's more about the difficulty level in textbooks and scientific papers. Have breaks during reading, to give your eyes and mind a rest. Learn to evaluate yourself after every reading, to go over what you did and didn't understand. Most of all, don't feel you have to understand things immediately -- for most people that is unrealistic and it is in the struggle to grasp the meaning that real gains are made and even new insights. See more answers Ask a Question Advertisement The advice in this section is based on the lived experiences of wikiHow readers like you. If you have a helpful tip you'd like to share on wikiHow, please submit it in the field below. Try to avoid listening to music or putting the TV on in the background while you read. It can make it harder to track what's happening in the book if you have too much going on noise-wise. Try reading a little bit before bed every night. Not only is it a good way to improve your reading skills, but you might have some fun dreams about whatever you've read! If you're new to reading, choose books with fun pictures! It really makes the process more enjoyable. Whenever you come across a word you don't recognize, stop and look it up. Co-authored by: Teacher & Education Researcher This article was co-authored by Soren Rosier, PhD. Soren Rosier is an Education Expert based in Palo Alto, CA. He is the founder of PeerTeach, a platform that empowers students to grow their leadership, confidence, and love of math through AI-powered peer tutoring. Additionally, he is an instructor at the Stanford Graduate School of Education, where he teaches courses on designing impactful tools for learning. Before beginning his PhD, he taught middle school in Oakland, developed teacher training programs, and evaluated the efficacy of popular ed tech products at SRJ International. He received his undergraduate degree from Harvard University and a PhD in Learning Sciences & Technology Design at Stanford University. This article has been viewed 1,747,021 times. Co-authors: 152 Updated: March 19, 2025 Views: 1,747,021 Categories: Improving Reading Skills Print Send fan mail to authors Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 1,747,021 times. "All of it was very descriptive, and each method was written really well. Each of the ways that were meant to help improve reading skills actually work. I tried all of them, and each one of them is very effective. This information will help a lot of people."..." more Share your story

