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Flexibility Yes. Speed No.

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Editorial Comment

Flexibility Yes. Speed No.

Although not as popular as it once was several years ago, some college students and adults still ask for classes in "speed" reading. What do these individuals really want? The answer is ability to read more effectively.

It is true that good readers can read rapidly, but they do not always do so. They do, however, know when to read rapidly and when to read slowly. This shifting of rate up or down to meet changes in difficulty of materials and modifications of purpose is a characteristic of effective reading and involves *flexibility*. The flexible reader selects and skims off that which he needs. In skimming, the reader quickly identifies, interprets and evaluates ideas in order to secure a general impression as, for example, an *overview* of a chapter or a *preview* of a book. In this process no one can read faster than he can think. The essential skills are complex and represent one of the most difficult acts of reading. Physical, psychological and environmental factors contribute to flexibility of reading and these are not easily modified by mechanized equipment and skill-drill procedures. Rapid reading is a concomitant of effective reading. The emphasis should be placed upon flexibility and not speed.

How fast should one read? This question is similar to the question: How fast should one drive a car? The rate at which a car is driven should depend upon the condition of the car, the skill of the driver, the hazards of the highway, and the purpose for which the trip is being made. In like manner, the rate of reading is determined by all the factors which affect the efficiency of the human organism, by the nature of the material being read, and by the reader's purpose. Flexibility is the answer. Speed never.

Homer L. J. Carter
Editor