

# How Would You Rate Your Study Habits?

## Editor's Note:

Warm weather, and sunny days seem to have moved into the atmosphere at Salem lately. One problem with the coming of Spring is that it is followed closely by final exams! How many of us are finding an abundance of self-discipline for study on these beautiful days? Not many, it seems.

A glance over the study hints below may be helpful. Most of us could use an extra push to concentrate on books instead of tans!

About 85 per cent of the work you do as a college student involves reading. It is the single most important learning skill, and yet many students are bogged down in poor reading habits that can make studying a chore.

Reading is the visual ability to understand words and their relationship one to another. To improve reading skills you must increase your capacity to see and grasp the grouping of words, or ideas, at a speed that is comfortable for you. The key is to move your eyes at a rate that allows your brain to absorb the main ideas printed on a page.

Remember, your eyes, like fingers for the piano or legs for jogging, must be trained to be skillful. If you would like to tune up your reading skills, these basic steps will help.

## STEP 1 - EVALUATE YOUR READING HABITS

Do you vocalize words in your mind, or move your lips as you read? You may be using the childhood habit of sounding out each word. This slows you down.

Do strange words constantly stop your progress? Your vocabulary needs improving.

Do you read every single word separately? Train your eyes to span phrases and to group thought units together.

Do you have to back up and reread very often? You are not paying attention. Force yourself to concentrate.

Do you read everything at the same speed? Your speed should vary with the subject matter.

Are you reading faster now than when you were in high school? Skillful reading is an art and needs continual practice.

## STEP 2 - PROVIDE THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE

To read effectively, you need to set the scene for concentration. Pick a quiet place where you can read with a minimum of interruption. Have a pencil ready for taking notes.

Most individuals find that 15 inches away from their eyes is a comfortable distance to hold a book. Make sure the lighting is good.

Radio, television, and music, all pull your attention away from the words and ideas you are reading.

## STEP 3 - USE YOUR EYES EFFICIENTLY

The eyes see printed words and transmit them to the brain. They

are the key to how well you read.

Eyes perceive words only when they stop moving or make what is called a "fixation". During the pause, the brain registers what the eyes have seen. Depending on your eye span, you will perceive one, two or more words in each fixation. The average college student, for example, has a span of 1.1 words and makes 4 fixations per second. By increasing the number of words your eyes include in each fixation, you increase your reading speed.

Train your eyes to take in more than one word at a time. You can make your eyes fix on related words, phrases, or short lines in one brief stop. This sentence, for example, should be read in five fixations: "The cost of oil - has risen - because of - limited natural resources - and increased imports."

Vocalizing words, even in your mind, slows down your eyes. Don't allow your eyes to wander backward. Try not to reread sentences. You will find that you remember more if you can keep moving forward. This does not mean, of course, that you cannot review what you have read.

## STEP 4 - BROADEN YOUR VOCABULARY

The person with a good grasp of words is usually a good reader and a good student. Your vocabulary should continue to grow throughout your lifetime.

Keep a dictionary hand, whether you are reading for pleasure or for work. Also use the glossaries in your textbooks.

Make a list of new words. Jot down unfamiliar words. Look them up, and then make a point of using them once or twice in writing or in speech within the next few days.

## STEP 5 - ADAPT YOUR SPEED TO THE MATERIAL

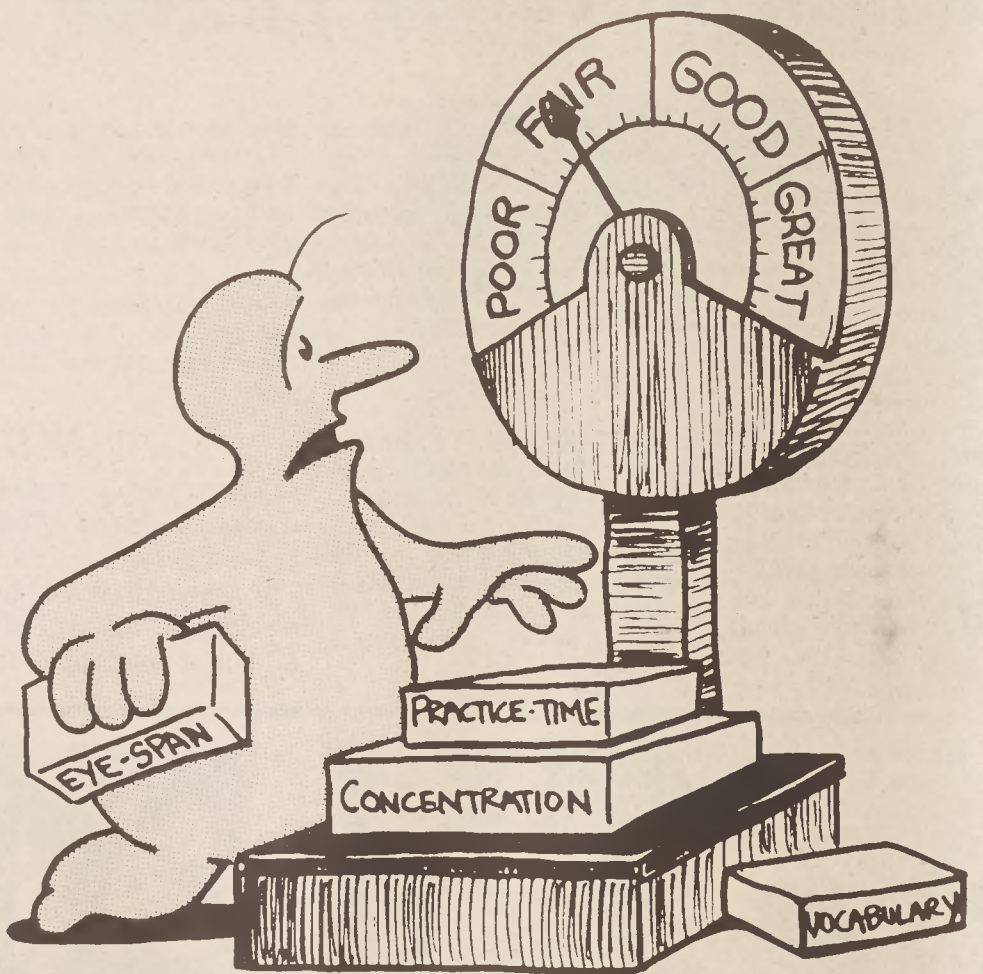
Don't expect to read everything at the same rate. A good reader balances speed with comprehension.

Adjust your pace to your purpose. You can't expect to whiz through a biology chapter at the same rate you could read a light novel.

Scan the material first. Form the habit of glancing quickly at headlines, chapter headings and subheads. Look for main ideas. Then decide which parts you can skim and which will need more careful reading.

When reading a text, first survey the entire book. Look over the table of contents, chapter headings, and subheads. Get an overview of the author's objectives by reading the introduction or preface.

Studying requires close reading because you will need to remember both the main ideas and supporting details. Underline major points as you read. Make margin notes of ideas that occur to you. After you finish reading, glance back over the entire chapter to see if you grasped the key points.



DAY STUDENT OFFICERS -- (l-r) Rosemary Hege, president; Becky Badgett, vice president; Martha Lynn Thomas, secretary; Pam Snyder, treasurer.

(Staff Photo)

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