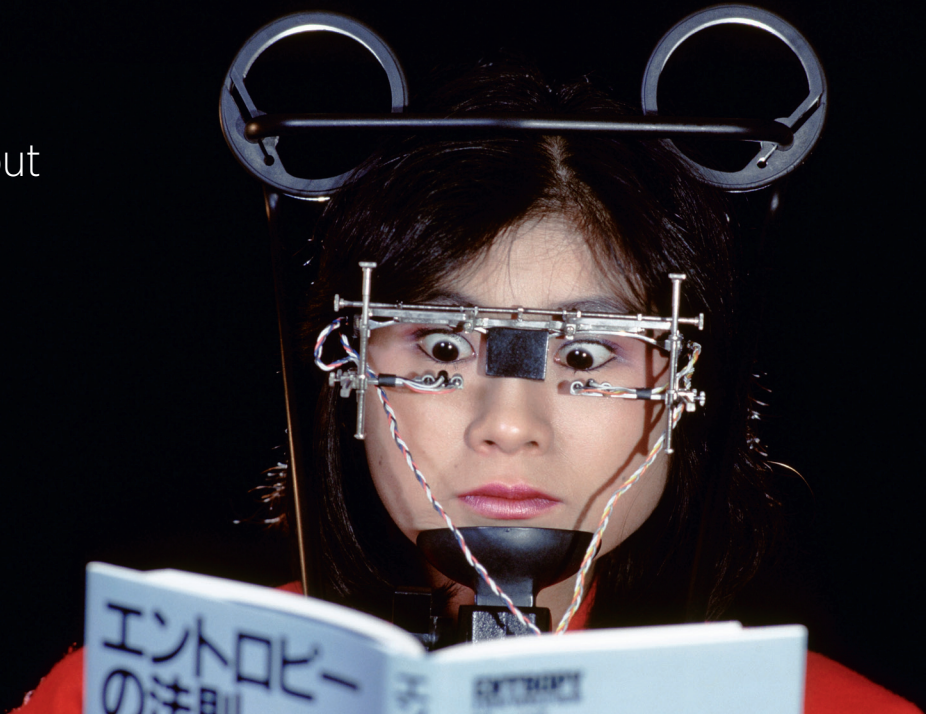


# Up to speed

There's more to speed reading than covering ground quickly, as memory specialist **Mark Channon** finds out



At a speed reading school in Japan, a student uses technology to increase her reading speed

**I**f you want to get from London to Brighton, make a few stops along the way and quickly get to your destination, would you choose a car or a bicycle? In this scenario a car would be your best form of transport. If however it is a sunny day and you want to enjoy the scenery with a group of friends, perhaps a bicycle would be more suitable. Being able to do both offers you greater choice.

You could think of reading in the same way. There will be occasions when you want to savour a book and enjoy the story, but often you will simply want to get from A to B, understand key concepts and get quick results. Having a range of reading speeds offers you this choice.

Here are three simple strategies that will get you started with speed reading.

## PRIME

Prime your brain for a great learning experience. Ask yourself this simple question before reading an article or book: "What do I want this article, book, chapter to give me?" And think carefully about your answer - in doing so you will be more likely to pick up relevant information.

You would generally check your map before going on a journey. Do the same with reading: preview the big picture

It takes time for your brain to switch onto automatic pilot. Only then will you start to notice more things and increase your understanding

and study the table of contents, chapters, headings and index for anything that will catch your attention.

## GUIDE

Think back to when you were learning to read as a child. What did you do? Like most people, you probably used your finger to guide your eyes. This helped to stop your eyes from jumping backwards in the middle of a sentence either consciously or subconsciously - this is referred to as back-skipping or regression.

Why not re-kindle this technique? Use a pen as a guide for your eyes and move it smoothly under each line, building up speed as you go. Remember what it was like as a learner driver: you were so focused on the process that you probably didn't take in much else. Speed reading is

no different. It takes time for your brain to switch onto automatic pilot. Only then will you start to notice more things along the way and increase your understanding.

## PROBE

It's quite natural to read a fictional book and to talk through the story with a partner or friend. Try doing the same with non-fiction. Check your understanding by first questioning yourself about its content, doodling your thoughts and then sharing your learnings verbally. This will improve how you understand the material.

Dealing with information overload is increasingly challenging. Imagine what a difference it would make to you if you could rise to this challenge by applying a few simple strategies. As with learning to drive a car, it won't happen overnight but for most the payoff will be well worth it. ■

Memory specialist Mark Channon is an author and coach