

Conquering the Information Deluge -- Handling Books, Magazines, Newsletters

By Joy-Ellen Lipsky, Success with Joy!

One of the areas that is hardest for people to get a handle on is reading -- books, newsletters, magazines -- in order to keep current on the latest information in their areas of interest. It's always been a curiosity to me as to why we don't teach our children how to "learn" more effectively when they are just starting school. Imagine the difference in attitude if learning was fun and easy.

As adults, most of us still don't know or use the fundamental principles of learning techniques. This includes the different techniques to read a book, magazine, newspaper, and newsletter. Once you have some of these down, you will be better able to deal with the mounds of reading required.

Here are some tips to get you started in tackling printed material:

Reading Books

Learn power reading techniques. Some good information can be found in

- "How to Read a Book" by Mortimer Adler and Charles Doren
- "Accelerated Learning" by Colin Rose
- "Power Reading" by Phyllis Mindell

Here are some of the basics for how to read books faster, and with more retention

- Look at the Table of Contents and the index. Search for keywords, and the basic structure of the book. Watch out for books without an index -- this is an important part of the book.
- Read the foreword to gather insights from the author, or others, on the content.
- Read the first and last sentences of paragraphs in the book. Read the chapter summary section.
- If you need the details, deep-read the book.
- Jot notes in the margin (if it's your book, of course) or on a piece of paper.
- Highlight relevant entries. Don't over-highlight -- just the crucial pieces of info.
- Create a mindmap of each chapter
 - To learn to mindmap, read Joyce Wycoff's "Mindmapping."
 - For each chapter, create a mindmap of the major and minor points, and any detail you wish to recall in the future

Reading Magazines

For your own magazines:

- Scan the table of contents
- Note articles of interest to you
- Rip out these articles and put them into your "to be read" folder
- Throw the rest of the magazine away
- Keep an article or two with you, to read during small bits of otherwise wasted time (e.g. waiting for meetings to start)

For someone else's magazines, note down articles of interest to you, then see if you can get permission to copy. Alternatively, order a reprint or check and see if it is on the magazine's website. If there are many articles in the issue of interest, buy a copy for yourself and apply the "rip and read" method.

- Look for the main point of the article
- Read the last paragraph for a summary
- Go back and read the first and last sentences of each paragraph
- Read in-depth if you need, to for details

Reading Newsletters

- Skim the newsletter for topics of interest
- Highlight the titles and put a flag on the page
- Drop the newsletter into your "to be read" folder
- Follow the reading technique for articles

Employability in the 21st Century requires you maintain knowledge in your areas of specialty and interest. To do this effectively you must learn how to read different types of material and improve your retention. You might want to consider getting books and magazines on tape to listen to during commute times -- this is a very efficient use of time.

Joy-Ellen Lipsky is a speaker, trainer, and technologist, whose success skills guide her clients in creating effective lives and organizations.

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