

## Overcoming Information Overload;

### How to Quickly Read Through Magazines, Articles, White Papers and More

There's a specific reason why I put a table of contents in this document. Read on and you'll understand that reason.

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The best book I've read on organizing and reading information is, *How to Survive the Information Age*. It's a step-by-step process that taught me many things, most importantly, it taught me how to read periodicals, reports, books, and white papers efficiently. This paper will cover some of the things I learned from that book and some of the other books I've studied on personal productivity.

## Tools

Stop.

Forget about all the information that is contained in this document. *It's useless* if it overwhelms you, in the least. What we need is a way to survive the onslaught of the information age.

We'll begin right here, right now, with this document. I promise, that after you're done reading the next few paragraphs, you'll never look at information the same way. I'm merely sharing a formula for reading. That's it. It's that simple. Lastly, you'll cut your stress level, when it comes to dealing with documents and information in general.

1. Get a piece of paper and write down why you are reading this document. What is your *purpose*?
  - a. Maybe you could ask yourself some of these questions to help you find that answer
    - i. what do you want to know?
    - ii. what do you want to get out of this paper?
    - iii. is there a certain question you want answered?
    - iv. facts you need to know?
  - b. There are six fundamental purposes for reading:
    - i. to *grasp* a certain message
    - ii. to *find* important details
    - iii. to *answer* a specific question
    - iv. to *evaluate* what you are reading
    - v. to *apply* what you are reading
    - vi. to be *entertained*
  - c. Answer the question posed and you will cut your reading time a great deal. By answering this simple question. You are automatically filtering out zillions of piece of information that you do not want to know.
  - d. Said a different way
    - i. purpose defines reading *methods*
      1. there are *3 basic methods of reading*
        - a. quick reference (seek specific information on a question posed or concern)
        - b. critical (discerning ideas and concepts. analysis)

c. pleasure

2. Let's get going. *Go back to the table of contents* (TOC). Read it. Mark the entries that interest you, with a pen. **If you are viewing this electronically, then use MS Words' highlighting tool.** (It's the icon right next to the font color icon.) When you are done, come back to this section and go to step 3.
3. You've just cut your reading time by at least 50% or more because you've marked what is important to you. This tool is a filter for deleting unwanted data.
4. The next step is to go to the chapters you highlighted in the TOC and do the following:
  - a. *read the chapter* title to reinforce the subject matter
  - b. *read the text* and **use a highlighter or pen to mark anything that catches your eye.**
  - c. go to the next chapter title and repeat steps, a and b
5. *Here's one more tool* you may want to use. **Highlight the sections you need to access later in yellow.** **Highlight the sections that you want to read about later in a different color.** That way, you don't have to keep that information in your head.

That's all there is to it. You can do this with a magazine, newsletter, or a white paper etc. That's it for now. There are plenty of other tools. But, we need to stick with a few at a time. The idea is to not overwhelm you. You can move on in this document or come back later.

## Disseminating Information

Having access to information is the most important aspect of 'how to survive the information age'. If you already know where a large amount of data is, then you've saved a lot of time.

1. I've built a dbase containing 1000s of documents and web sites. It can be accessed on the network shared drive, GH Data on 'Chidc1'. The folders for the dbase are located as follows: TA Trader DB | Information\_dbase | Research

The database consists two main categories:

1. documents
2. web sites
3. go to the data base
4. read the 'read me' document in the Information\_dbase folder
5. Now, scan the folders. They're in alphabetical order. Jot down what subject interest you.
  - a. by completing the steps above you'll save 60% of your time because:

- i. you will have a better understanding what is in the dbase
- ii. you'll understand whether it's something you want to look at

## Books

Ron Fry has a great line of books on personal productivity and more. I quote him often in this document. Furthermore, many of the methods in this paper are his.

### Reading tools for books

1. The tool I provided in the introduction section above called 'Tools' is a good tool for reading magazines and white papers. Now, we need a *tool for reading books*. Here's a list of things that can help you breeze through a book.
2. get a sheet of paper
  - a. Use this paper for the small number of notes you will need to write. Keep the paper in the book at the front after you are done using the book.
3. go to the TOC in the book
4. Mark the chapters that interest you with a pen. Or, if you don't want to mark up the book, then get a post it note, write the chapters that interest you on the note and stick the note on the TOC, in the book.
5. If there's an 'Introduction' or 'Preface' in the book, read it. The theme of the book will be in there. Write the theme down on the sheet of paper. If there isn't a theme, don't worry, you'll find it later. When you do come across it write it down on the top of the paper.
6. go to the first chapter you marked
  - a. read the title, then, any sub headings in the chapter
  - b. read any bullet points
  - c. read any diagrams
  - d. look at any pictures and read the captions
  - e. Look at the end of the chapter and see if there is a chapter summary. Read it.
7. Now, go back to the beginning of the chapter and read the first line of every paragraph, through the end to the chapter.
8. You may be done. For some people this is all that is needed to get an understanding what they are trying to say.
9. If you want to, go back to the beginning of the chapter and read the text.

By following the simple steps above, you'll understand the theme and concepts of the chapter much better because you've already skimmed through it. The ideas will stick much better, also.

## Further Reading

The Great Big Book of Personal Productivity:

<http://www.careerpress.com/book178.html>

The rest of Ron's books can be found here:

[http://www.greatjobstore.com/author\\_search.php?q=Ronald+W.+Fry](http://www.greatjobstore.com/author_search.php?q=Ronald+W.+Fry)

## Mnemonics (memory techniques)

Memory techniques can be very helpful when you want to truly commit something to memory. I've posted a few documents on these techniques in the *document* section of the dbase under 'Productivity tools' then 'Mnemonics' (pronounced with the M silent).

Under the *web site section* of the dbase, go to 'Research & Tools' then, 'mnemonics'.

### Here are some basics about mnemonics:

1. The three fundamental principles underlying the use of mnemonics are:
  - a. association
  - b. imagination
  - c. location

### Association

"Association is the method by which you link a thing to be remembered to a method of remembering it. Although we can and will suggest associations to you, your own associations are much better as they reflect the way in which your mind works."

[reference unknown]

Things can be associated by:

1. being placed on top of the associated object
2. crashing or penetrating into each other
3. merging together
4. wrapping around each other
5. rotating around each other or dancing together
6. being the same color, smell, shape, or feeling
7. etc.

"Whatever can be used to link the thing being remembered with the image used to recall it is the association image." [reference unknown]

"As an example: Linking the number 1 with a goldfish might be done by visualizing a 1-shaped spear being used to spear a goldfish to feed a starving family." [reference unknown]

## Imagination

“Imagination is used to create the links and associations needed to create effective memory techniques - put simply, imagination is the way in which you use your mind to create the links that have the most meaning for you. Images that I create will have less power and impact for you, because they reflect the way in which we think. The more strongly you imagine and visualize a situation, the more effectively it will stick in your mind for later recall. Mnemonic imagination can be as violent, vivid, or sensual as you like, as long as it helps you to remember what needs to be remembered.” [reference unknown]

## Location

“Location provides you with two things: a coherent context into which information can be placed so that it hangs together, and a way of separating one mnemonic from another: e.g. by setting one mnemonic in one village, I can separate it from a similar mnemonic located in another place.

“Location provides context and texture to your mnemonics, and prevents them from being confused with similar mnemonics. For example, by setting one mnemonic with visualizations in the town of Horsham in the UK and another similar mnemonic with images of Manhattan allows us to separate them with no danger of confusion.

“So using the three fundamentals of Association, Imagination and Location you can design images that strongly link things with the links between themselves and other things, in a context that allows you to recall those images in a way that does not conflict with other images and associations.” [reference unknown]

## White Paper on Organizational skills (The Spire Project)

There's a great white paper called, [The Spire Project](#). I've posted this document on the link mentioned in the 'Disseminating Information' section of this document. Here's a clip from that paper.

## The Information Research FAQ

“100 pages of search techniques, tactics and theory by David Novak of the Spire Project. ([www.SpireProject.com](http://www.SpireProject.com)) This FAQ addresses information literacy; the skills, tools and theory of information research. Particular attention is paid to the internet as both a reservoir and gateway to information resources.”

## Speed-Reading

Speed-reading is no longer the 'Evelyn Wood' courses many of us grew up with. The advent of the computer has helped this skill flourish.

I use [Rocket Reader](#).