A short history of English – Reading Speed

	Words	Total WPM
During Roman times the British spoke a Celtic language, but in the 5th Century AD,	16.4	16
the Roman Empire crumbled and invaders came from Denmark and Northern Germany.	15.8	32
The Angles, Saxons and Jutes spread their language across England. The Angles were the	17.2	49
ones to give English its name, Englisc. In the 9th century the Vikings came and added	17.2	67
many words from Scandinavian languages. Englisc was originally written with an	15.6	82
alphabet called Runic.	4.4	87
In 1066 the Normans invaded and during the centuries that followed a lot of words were	17.2	104
borrowed from French and Latin, it was also during this period that English lost	16.2	120
its old suffixes. (The way words end) It took until 1205 for another book to be written	17.4	137
in English, but by 1258 it was used again by royalty and in 1362 it was used again	16.4	154
by the courts and in the 1380's Chaucer wrote his Canterbury tales in English.	15.6	169
In 1474 William Caxton was the first person to import a printing press. This enabled	16.8	186
him to make many more copies of documents than could be handwritten and with	15.2	201
it began the process of standardisation of the English language. This was then further	17.2	219
pushed by Richard Pynson in the early 1500's. However it was Shakespeare's work	15.8	234
and the King James Bible that cemented the vocabulary. It was also in the 1600's	16	250
that the British started to travel more and words were borrowed from languages	15.6	266
around the world including: Arabic, Hindi, Malay, Farsi, Nahuatl (Aztec), Sanskrit,	16.6	283
Tupi (S.America) and Ewe (Africa). This led to an explosion in vocabulary and	15.4	298
a loud calling for standardisation which was met by Samuel Johnson and Robert Lowth.	17	315
In 1746 Samuel Johnson was paid £1575 to create a standard dictionary. It took him	16.6	332
9 years, but he managed to do it with just a couple of clerics to copy down the words.	17.4	349
In 1755 he completed a work with 40,000 definitions and 114,000 quotes from literature.	17.4	366
A Dictionary of the English Language became the model for the Oxford English Dictionary.	17.6	384
		384
In 1762 Robert Lowth created *A short Introduction to English grammar that used Latin*	16.8	401
and Greek as a base for English grammar and the textbook remained in standard	15.6	416
usage throughout educational institutions until the early 20th century. These two books	17.6	434
were hugely influential and cemented many of the spellings and grammar rules	15.2	449
that we see today.	3.6	453
In June 1857 Richard Chenevix Trench, Herbert Coleridge, and Frederick Furnivall	16	469
decided that there were too many words missing from existing dictionaries and	15.4	484
formed a committee. The project officially started in 1860 and in 1879 Oxford	15.4	500
University Press agreed to publish it. In 1884 the first part of the dictionary	16	516
was published, but the first edition was released in 1928 and was re-issued	15.2	531
in 1933 as the *Oxford English Dictionary.*	7.8	539

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How to use the Reading Speed Assessment

This is a very simple Reading Speed Assessment tool to give you a rough idea of the speed you can read at. Here is how to assess your reading speed.

1. Set a Stopwatch for 1 minute or better still a countdown.

2. Start Reading

3. When you have read for 1 minute mark the last word you have read.

Quick Estimate

For a quick estimation, if you read less than half the line, look at the line above and if you read more than half look at the end of the line you are reading.

Accurate Estimate

Look at the word count for the line above. Then count every five characters you have read including spaces and that will give you an accurate summary.

How Words Per Minute is measured (WPM)

The official measure of words per minute is any five characters including spaces. This is a standard benchmark used for typing speeds, but may not always reflect the actual word count. In this case the total wpm is 539, but the word count is 464.