

4.2 Information overload

GRAMMAR Approximation

1 Read the text. Choose the correct options to complete each sentence.

The faster the better?

Would reading faster enable you to work and action emails quicker? Would it be worth the time spent to learn how to? According to research, most of us read ¹ *approximately / odd* 250 to 300 words per minute. Speed-reading courses claim to teach people to read ² *as few as / as many as* 1,200 words per minute. That is ³ *roughly / as little as* four times as many. Does that mean we could work ⁴ *as many as / as much as* four times faster?

The concept of speed reading has been around for ⁵ *as little as / about* 60 years but recently, with data being more accessible and bountiful, reading for speed has become more interesting. A Google search for speed-reading courses shows up ⁶ *just*

over / as few as 51 million hits. Reading at an average speed, we take ⁷ *or thereabouts / around* one to two minutes to read a page or an email. Even if we only doubled this speed it would make us more efficient at work.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows by JK Rowling contains ⁸ *nearly / as much as* 200,000 words and an average reader needs eleven hours ⁹ *more or less / sort of* to read the book. Reportedly, avid Harry Potter fans can read it in around four hours. In 2007, Anne Jones read this Harry Potter book in 47 minutes and one second and read ¹⁰ *some / as much as* 4,251 words per minute to make that world record. Imagine how quickly she would get through a full inbox!

3 Complete the sentences to describe the most positive outcome, a, b or c.

- 1 Buy your ticket soon. If you buy it in advance it can cost ...
a as little as £30.
b at least £30.
c just over £30.
- 2 I can't quite remember but I think the project itself was completed in ...
a around a week.
b at least a week.
c under a week.
- 3 Word has been spreading, there are ... registrations.
a as few as 80
b as many as 80
c just over 80

4 I've had ... ten job offers as a result of my new profile.

- a as many as
 - b fewer than
 - c at least
- 5 It's been running for ...
a just over fifty years.
b just under fifty years.
c fifty years or thereabouts.
 - 6 It's improved productivity by ... twenty-five per cent.
a as little as
b nearly
c some

4 1 28 Match the questions with the answers.

- 1 How many books do you read a week?
- 2 Do you get many emails a day?
- 3 Was that speed-reading app free, by the way?
- 4 How long does it take you to check your emails?
- 5 Did the app tell you your reading speed?
- 6 Have you read the finance report yet?
- 7 How many people attended that course you went to last week?
- 8 How do they think productivity has improved since they ran the course?

- a Oh, by as much as 15 per cent, they say.
- b It did! It's just over 350 a minute at the moment.
- c More or less all morning most days.
- d Nearly 25. A few extra joined at the last minute.
- e No, it cost about a fiver, but it's really good.
- f Roughly one and a half, but it depends on the week.
- g Yes, sometimes as many as a hundred.
- h Yes, and it took me approximately two hours to read.

5 Complete the sentences with the missing adjectives with the *-ish* suffix.

- 1 I'd say he's t_____ , definitely over 1.80 metres.
- 2 A: Has that Thai restaurant near your office just opened?
B: It's been open a couple of months, so I guess it's n_____. It's good. You should try it.
- 3 I don't know how old she is exactly. She's not just out of university and she's quite experienced, perhaps th_____.
- 4 There's an evening meeting at work so I'll be home l_____ again, sorry.
- 5 I didn't like the picture. It was rather c_____. It looked like the painter was about ten!
- 6 It's a l_____ journey; about three and a half hours I would think – depending on traffic of course.

6 Complete the sentences with these words and phrases.

a kind of something like	odd sort of	other things stuff
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- 1 Esperanto is an invented language, not a natural one. It's a mix of lots of other languages with only a thousand _____ native speakers worldwide.
- 2 A sat nav is _____ smart phone for the car. It helps you find where you're going.
- 3 A lanyard is _____ a key ring but longer. You have them at conferences and for company IDs.
- 4 An e-reader is a device that can store lots of readable _____.
- 5 A shredder is an office machine that destroys documents and _____ that are sensitive, so no one can read them afterwards. It's important for data protection.
- 6 A tracker is a _____ watch; it collects and shows information about what your body does over the course of 24 hours.

VOCABULARY Obstacles and opportunities

4 Match the phrases (1–8) with their meanings (a–h).

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|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 sell like hot cakes | a tackle the problem |
| 2 come up against a brick wall | b express your worries |
| 3 be an obstacle | c sell very well |
| 4 meet with opposition | d not be welcomed or liked |
| 5 address the issue | e have a dramatic impact |
| 6 get a cool reception | f have your progress blocked |
| 7 make a splash | g find others are against you |
| 8 voice one's concerns | h be a barrier to progress |

5 Complete the sentences. Use the correct form of the words and phrases from Exercise 4. Use the negative form if necessary.

- 1 Their new smartphone _____ from the press. One magazine only gave it one star out of five.
- 2 We feel that the toy is unsuitable for the age range (4–8 years) it is targeted at and we have _____ to the advertising standards authority.
- 3 The makers of the film really wanted to _____ when the film came out so they organized a giant free open-air screening in Central Park.
- 4 You can try to persuade him if you want to. When I tried, I _____.
- 5 JK Rowling's first adult novel _____, thanks to the success of her Harry Potter series.
- 6 The move to get people using the stairs instead of the lift initially _____, but after a while employees began to see the benefits to their health.
- 7 Money _____. I'm only concerned in getting the job done quickly and well.
- 8 We have to _____ of why so many parents are choosing to educate their children at home.