

**Dr. Bates answers
your questions
about**

Reading Fine Print

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Photo by Bethany Laird at Unsplash

Q: Is reading too great a strain for the eyes?

A: No. Reading is good for the eyes.

Q: Would the reading of fine print at four inches be helpful?

A: The reading of fine print at four inches is usually helpful.

Q: How often must one read fine print to obtain benefit?

A: Daily.

Q: Should one practice with fine print by holding it where it can be seen best or at the normal distance?

A: Hold the print at the distance from your eyes at which you see best. Remember not to look directly at the letters.

Q: Should children read microscopic print?

A: Yes, the more the better. Reading microscopic print is a benefit to the eyes of both children and adults.

Q: If fine print is beneficial, why do they print children's school books in large type?

A: For the same reason that some people wear glasses — Ignorance of the proper way. Boards of Education have not yet learned that it is a strain



Reading is one of the best things you can do for vision, if you don't strain.

Photo by *Patricia Prudente* at *Unsplash*

for anyone to look at big print and a relaxation to read fine print.

Q: Why is it a rest to read fine print? I should think it would be a strain.

A: Fine print is a relaxation, large print a menace. It requires more of an effort to accommodate the eye to large

type than to small. Fine print can be read perfectly only when the eyes are relaxed. If any effort is made, the print immediately blurs. It is, therefore, evident that the more fine print you are able to read, the more continuously relaxed your eyes are.

Q: Why is fine print beneficial?

A: Fine print is beneficial because it cannot be read by a strain or effort. The eyes must be relaxed.

Q: I am presbyopic. How can I improve my vision by reading fine print when I can not even see it?

A: By reading fine print and alternately remembering the whiteness of snow for a second while looking at the white spaces between the lines of print.

Then close your eyes and remember or imagine the same white more continuously, better and more easily.

By alternating, you may become able to remember the white as well when flashing the card as you can with your eyes closed, and your vision will be improved. *(Continued on page 4)*

Imagination Technique to Improve Close Vision

by William H. Bates, MD

Some years ago, a remarkable patient came to see me. The first thing she said was that she had to catch a train which left in a few hours.

I asked her if she wanted to be cured quickly. She answered, "If you please."

I said to her, "You can be cured quickly if you do just exactly what I say."

She replied very solemnly, "I promise to do whatever you say."

I handed her a small card on which was printed some lines of diamond type. I asked her what she could see.

She said, "I see a gray card and a lot of blurred gray letters. They all seem to look alike, and there are no spaces between the words or letters, and not always between the lines."

I said to her, "With your eyes closed, can you remember such a thing as a sunset, a red sun and different colored clouds?"

"Yes," she said.

"With your eyes still closed, can you remember or imagine a white cloud in the sky, dazzling white with the sun shining on it?"

"Yes," she answered.

Then I gave her the following directions: "Close your

eyes, keeping them closed until you can remember a white cloud in the sky, dazzling white with the sun shining on it.

"Then open your eyes and glance at the fine print, still remembering your white cloud — but be sure to close your eyes before you have time to read any of the letters."

I watched her do this for a few minutes and saw she was following my directions properly. Then I left her to practice by herself.

After about half an hour, I returned and asked her how she was getting along. Her face was a little bit flushed, and in an apologetic tone, she said:

"I tried to do just exactly what you told me to do, Doctor. And I am sorry to say that although I only looked at the card for a second at a time, in flashes, contrary to your instructions I read every word on the card."

Then I explained that of course at the first visit she was not expected to do what I asked her to do



Imagine sunlight on a cloud, or bright white snow. Photo by Nick Saxby at Unsplash

exactly — but under the circumstances, I thought she had done very well, indeed.

I gave her some other fine print to practice with in the same way, but held six inches from her eyes. With her eyes closed, she remembered the white cloud as before, keeping her eyes closed until her memory was perfect.

Then she flashed the white spaces between the lines for a second. I watched her for awhile, and asked, "What is the trouble?"

"Nothing," she said. "I close my eyes and remember the white cloud. I also remember it very well with my eyes open.

"When I do, I cannot help seeing the white spaces perfectly white and the black letters perfectly black. But I am sorry to say I cannot avoid reading the letters."

Then I held out my hand to her and said, "Shake hands. I am very pleased with you and this time, I will forgive you for not avoiding reading the letters."

Q: When I read and blink consciously, I lose my place.

A: This is caused by strain, which prevents one from remembering the location of letters.

Q: What can I do to help my sight when my vision blurs when reading?

A: Palm more frequently or imagine the white spaces between the lines are whiter than the other parts of the page.

Partly-Closing the Eyelids

Q: If type can be seen more distinctly with the eyes partly closed, is it advisable to read that way?

A: No, it is not advisable to read that way because it is a strain, and alters the shape of the eyeball.



Reading fine print keeps vision good for life. Photo by *bruce mars* at *Unsplash*

Q: If one practices reading fine print for a time each day, is it harmful to read print like that of the Forum (usual magazine type)?

A: No, the more you read, the better, even though you read with imperfect sight. Large print can be read with a strain, but fine print can only be read when the eyes are relaxed. It is all right to read print of any size if one reads it with perfect sight.

When read with imperfect sight, the eyes are under a strain. Imperfect sight is always caused by a stare or strain, and one can stare or strain when regarding a large letter, blurring it to a considerable degree, and yet be able to tell what the letter is.

The same amount of strain, when produces as much of a blur when looking at a small letter, may make it impossible for one to read the small letter perfectly, although he can still distinguish the

Q: Is it an injury to read in dim light?

A: No. It is a benefit to the eyes.

Q: Dr. Bates says that in reading fine print one should look between the lines. Is this not contrary to the principles of Central Fixation? To see the print best, should one not look directly at it?

A: One can look between the lines and shift to the black letters with Central Fixation.



Reading in dim light can improve your eyesight.

Photo by Klim Sergeev at Unsplash

Q: Should one imagine a thin white line along the top of a word or sentence or just at the bottom?

A: If you can imagine it at the top as easily as you can at the bottom, do so, otherwise, imagine it only at the bottom.

Q: (1) Does the improvement of the sight by the Bates Method increase the rapidity of reading?

(2) Is slow reading conducive to strain?

A: (1). The better the letters are seen the more rapidly they can be read. (2) Yes.

Q: Is it possible to regain the ability to read without glasses when it fails after the age of forty, the sight at the distance being perfect? If so how can this be done?



Stop staring and straining to see!

Photo by Alex Harvey at Unsplash

A: The failure of the sight at the near-point after forty is due to the same cause as its failure at any other point and at any other age, namely strain.

The sight can be restored by practicing at the near-point the

same methods used to improve the vision at the distance – palming, shifting, swinging, etc. The sight is never perfect at the distance when imperfect at the near point, but will become so when the sight at the near point has become normal.

Q: I began to wear glasses for farsightedness when I was 26. I began with convex 1.00 D. S. and now at 42 I am wearing convex 2/50 D. S., or was until a few weeks ago when I decided to try the methods presented in this magazine.

I can read and sew with ease in the daylight, but cannot read fine print even in a strong electric light for more than a few minutes without getting a dull ache at the back of my eyeballs. What I want to ask is this:

- (1). Do you advise the use of the test card in my case, or is it only for children?
- (2) Would the swing help me, and if so will you explain it a little more clearly?
- (3) Is it best to go without the glasses as much as I can, or am I injuring my eyes by so doing?

(4) Would it retard the cure to use the glasses just for evening reading?

(5) How long will it take for my eyes to become young again, if that is possible?

A: (1) The test card is for everybody.

(2) Yes, the swing would help you. The normal eye is constantly shifting, and thus an apparent movement of objects regarded is produced.

(3) By consciously imitating this unconscious shifting of the normal eye and realizing the apparent movement which it produces, imperfect sight is always improved.

(4) You should discard your glasses permanently. They are never a benefit and always an injury to the eyes.

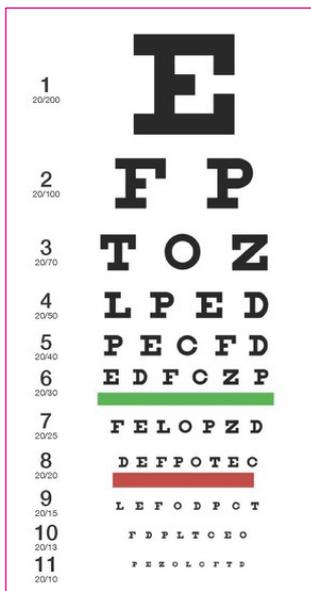
(5) It is entirely possible for your eyes to become young again, but it is impossible to guess how long this will take, because it is impossible to tell how well or intelligently you will practice central fixation.

Q: (1): Does the improvement of the sight by the Bates Method increase the rapidity of reading? (2) Is slow reading conducive to strain?

A: (1) The better the letters are seen the more rapidly they can be read. (2) Yes.

Q: Is it a strain to the eyes to read while riding on a train?

A: No, if there is no discomfort. It is a good thing to look out of the window and see the scenery moving in the opposite direction to that in which you are going, and then continue to read.



Q: (1) Is it advisable to use specimens of diamond type other than the “Seven Truths of Normal Sight?” Would it be well to get a New Testament in diamond type?

The Seven Truths of Normal Sight

1. Normal sight can always be demonstrated in the normal eye, but only under favorable conditions.
2. Central Fixation: The letter or part of the letter regarded is always seen best.
3. Shifting: The point regarded changes rapidly and continuously.
4. Swinging: When the shifting is slow, the letters appear to move from side to side or in other directions with a pendulum-like motion.
5. Memory is perfect: The color and background of the letters or other objects seen are remembered perfectly, instantaneously and continuously.
6. Imagination is good: One may even see the white part of letters whiter than it really is, while the black is not altered by distance, illumination, size or form of the letters.
7. Rest or relaxation of the eye and mind is perfect and can always be demonstrated.

When one of these seven fundamentals is perfect, all are perfect

— William H. Bates, M.D.

(2) I have thus far found the flashing method the most helpful. However, after closing the eyes, I have difficulty in opening them. The lids seem to stick together, as it were. What is the cause of such stickiness and the remedy?

(3) I was trying to read the “Seven Truths” lately by the flashing method, and for about twenty minutes obtained very little results.

Then, of a sudden, upon closing my eyes, I saw the blackest object I have ever seen with closed eyes. I was startled, it seemed so real, and on opening my eyes I was surprised to find that I could read practically all of the “Seven Truths” clearly, at thirteen inches, without closing my eyes.

I think the black object was probably the black rubber key of the electric socket in the fixture which I had unconsciously looked at from time to time during the exercise. I have not been able to do just this since. What is the probable reason for my failure?

(4) I find I see any reading matter more clearly in a bright light – sunlight or electric light – than in a dim or less bright light. Why is this?

(5) Today in trying to read the “Seven Truths” I found that I could do it at six or seven inches with few alternate

closings of the eyes; but I found in accomplishing this I was partially closing my eyelids, so that I must have looked much like the Patagonians in Fig. I in Dr. Bates' book, said to be probably myopic when the picture was taken.

I found that I could not keep my eyes thus partly closed without some strain, but I could not see the print clearly when

they were wide open. Often the print would look quite blurred when I first look at it, but it cleared perceptibly and became quite black as I continued to look.

I also found myself reading today twenty pages of fairly small print at about eight or nine inches in much the same way.

A: (1) Yes, if you wish to.

(2) Difficulty in closing or opening the eyes is a common symptom of strain, and may be relieved by any method that relieves strain.

(3) Such intervals of relaxation are a very common phenomenon. They will come more frequently and last longer if you continue to practice.



Fig. I. Pantagonians

The sight of this primitive pair and of the following groups of primitive people was tested at the World's Fair in St. Louis and found to be normal. The unaccustomed experience of having their pictures taken, however, has evidently so disturbed them that they were all, probably, myopic when they faced the camera.

Reprinted from *Perfect Sight Without Glasses* by William H. Bates, MD, 1919.

(4) In a bright light the contrast between black letters and their white background is more marked than in a dim light. Persons differ greatly, however, in the amount of light they require for maximum vision. Some people see better in a dim light, because they think that condition a favorable one.

(5) It is a bad one.

Q: I have improved my sight by palming, but when I read for any length of time the pain returns.

A: When you read and your eyes pain you, it means that you are straining your eyes. More frequent palming may help you more continuously.

Q: I have attained normal vision, but after reading for a while, my eyes feel strained. Would you still consider I had normal sight?

A: If your eyes feel strained you are not reading with normal vision.

Q: My eyes grow so tired when I read, that I usually fall asleep over my paper. Can this be helped?

A: Sleepiness is caused by strain. Strain is caused by imperfect sight. When you read with perfect sight you will not become sleepy.



Your flashes of clarity “will come more frequently and last longer if you continue to practice.” Quote by *W. H. Bates, MD.*

Photo by *Becca Tapert* at *Unsplash*