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| WHY READ 20 MINUTES EVERYDAY? | | |
| **Student A Reads** | Student B Reads | Student C Reads |
| **20 minutes per day.** | **5 minutes per day.** | **1 minute per day.** |
| **3,600 minutes per school years.** | **900 minutes per school year.** | **180 minutes per school year.** |
| **1,800,000 words per year.** | **282,000 words per year.** | **8,000 words per year.** |
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| * **Scores in the 90th percentile on standardized tests.** | * **Scores in the 50th percentile on standardized tests.** | * **Scores in the 10th percentile on standardized tests.** |
| WANT TO BE A BETTER READER? SIMPLY READ. | | |

Research by Hayes and Ahrens (1988) suggests that lighter reading can play an important role in helping readers move to more demanding texts. According to their findings, it is highly unlikely that much educated vocabulary comes from conversation or television. Hayes and Ahrens found that the frequency of less-common words in ordinary conversation, whether adult-to-child or adult-to-adult, was much lower than in even the “lightest” reading. About 95% of the words used in conversation and television are from the most frequent 5,000. Printed texts include far more uncommon words, leading Hayes and Ahrens to the conclusion that the development of lexical knowledge beyond basic words “requires literacy and extensive reading across a broad range of subjects”. Table 1 presents some of their data, including two of the three measures they used for word frequency. Note that comic books occupy a position between conversation and abstracts of scientific papers, falling somewhat closer to conversation. This suggests that they can serve as a conduit to more challenging reading.

##### Table 1. Common and uncommon words in speech and writing

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|  | ***Frequent words*** | ***Rare words*** |
| Adults talking to children | *95.6* | *9.9* |
| **Adults talking to adults (college grads)** | *93.9* | *17.3* |
| **Prime-time TV: adult** | *94* | *22.7* |
| **Children’s books** | *92.3* | *30.9* |
| **Comic books** | *88.6* | *53.5* |
| **Books** | *88.4* | *52.7* |
| **Popular magazines** | *85* | *65.7* |

***\*Research consistently concludes that vocabulary comes from reading, not study (Nagy and Herman, 1987).***