Improving Reading Fluency in a Second Language

This handout suggests strategies you can use to develop your fluency in reading.

Think Positively about Your Knowledge
- Read in that language to improve your skills.
- Focus on what you understand, not on what you don’t understand.

Read without Stopping
1. Do not stop and start or re-read passages too often.
2. Avoid frequently using a dictionary.
3. Divide up your reading into sections and read them one by one without stopping.
4. After reading a section, go back and look at the difficult parts if necessary. You might look up a few important words in a dictionary or puzzle over the meaning of a difficult sentence.

Read with a Purpose
1. Think about why you are reading the text.
2. Think about what information you need from the text.
3. Focus on reading for meaning instead of reading for translation.

Look for Key Words
To read faster, look for words or phrases that have meaning (these are called “meaning groups”). The sentences below are divided into meaning groups:

Psychology, broadly defined, is the systematic study of behavior and experience. Within that definition, there are many kinds of subspecialists with diverse interests and viewpoints.

Next, cross out all the small words in the text (articles, prepositions, etc.). The passage would look like this:

Psychology, broadly defined, is the systematic study of behavior and experience. Within that definition, there are many kinds of subspecialists with diverse interests and viewpoints.

Read the words that remain. You can get a lot of meaning from them! After practicing this, you will pay more attention to the most important words.