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***Review Article***

# The power of reading and strategies to develop a reading habit

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## Abstract

Reading provides people and students with a great deal of benefits. It opens the window to the new world, improves students' academic performance, expands people's knowledge, shows the roadblocks in people's lives, and heals mental illness. As people greatly benefit from reading, this review article aims to discuss the benefits of reading and provide suggestions to develop a reading habit. The article first discusses the power of reading, focusing on 10 critical roles of reading. It then offers several recommendations for cultivating a reading habit. The article concludes that building a reading habit is a hard and long process, but there are considerable benefits for those who are determined and disciplined to cultivate their reading habits.

**Keywords:** Power of reading; reading habits; benefits; strategies

## Introduction

Joseph Addison, an English essayist and poet, once remarked, "Reading is to the mind as exercise is to the body." (Tracy & Chee, 2013, pp. 77–78). This conventional wisdom remains true until Generation Alpha (born 2010–2024) (Mekouar, 2024). Reading remarkably improves our lives in many ways. It can expand our knowledge, enhance our critical thinking, and make us more creative and intelligent (Grant, 2023; Quach, 2018).

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Content creators, educators, and public speakers have shared a great deal of benefits of reading and have provided various strategies for building a reading habit, but the number of readers has not increased in recent years (Total Croatia News, 2023). In fact, the reading rate has gradually decreased year after year. One study mentioned by Osteen (2015) found that 50% of high school graduates failed to read one entire book per year. Similarly, another study by Ruff (2011, as cited in Maxwell, 2022) revealed that one-third of high school graduates stopped reading books for the rest of their lives, and 42% of university graduates never engaged in reading books after their graduation. As noted by Maxwell (2022), 32% of Americans never visited the bookstore. The interest in reading among American students has also declined (Grant, 2023).

Finland is a country with a population of just five million citizens; however, it claimed victory in the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, a standardized test of their math, reading, and science skills, for three consecutive times in 2000, 2003, and 2006 (Grant, 2023). Nevertheless, in 2018, the reading rate of Finnish teenagers dropped to 77 fewer hours compared to the reading rate in 2000 (Grant, 2023). Thus, even a country with a stellar educational system still needs urgent solutions to address the issue of reading for its young people.

In Cambodia, there are not many avid readers or bookworms. Global Giving (n.d.) noted that most Cambodian people are not interested in reading books. Instead of spending time in a local library, reading books with family, and talking about ideas in books with friends, many students and teenagers tend to spend time on social media, play games, and hang out with friends (Yen, 2023). Most people are active social media users but passive readers. By January 2023, there were 10.95 million social media users, equating to 65.0% of the total population in Cambodia (Kemp, 2023). This number had grown to 11.65 million social media users by February 2024 (Kemp, 2024). Compared to people in some countries such as Japan, South Korea, the USA, and other European countries, Cambodian people do not have a culture of reading books while commuting in public vehicles and visiting places (Sen, 2015, as cited in Vonn, 2021). On the 10th Cambodia Book Fair in 2023, 200,000 people flocked to the event (Hong, 2023). Nevertheless, the problem is that people overestimate the event and underestimate the action. They are elated about purchasing books in public but may not be delighted with reading them in private. Sadly, the data showed that,

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on average, Cambodian people could end up reading only 1.5 books a year (Nou & Prum, 2016).

This article aims to raise awareness of the benefits of reading. It first discusses ten benefits of reading. It then provides some recommendations for building a reading habit. Overall, the article concludes that it takes time and effort to build a reading habit; however, once a reading habit sinks deeply into people's hearts, it will produce a satisfying result beyond their wildest expectations.

## The power of reading

German philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, "Never let a day pass without looking at some perfect work of art, hearing, some great piece of music and reading, in part, some great book" (Maxwell, 2021, p. 112). This is great advice. We all recognize the value of reading. Novelist Joseph Conrad said, "Words have set whole nations in motion and upheaved the dry, hard ground on which rest our social fabric. Give me the right word and the right accent, and I will move the world" (Maxwell, 2010, p. 222). While public speaking is so powerful as it can change the world, reading is the secret weapon behind that. Before people, particularly leaders, are competent and confident enough to speak in public, they need to absorb knowledge and acquire information through reading. The following section discusses 10 benefits of reading.

### *Reading as a factory to produce human resources for economic growth*

Reading is an effective way to produce human resources for society and the country. Israeli-American author Tal Ben-Shahar was proud when he talked about his European ancestors, who received little formal education, did not study business at school, and never went to university (Ben-Shahar, 2021). However, they were very successful in business and became scholars. How did it happen? His ancestors studied the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud extensively and deeply. They read them daily and spent hours analyzing individual passages. Sometimes, it took them an entire day to grasp the idea or meaning of a single word in the books (Ben-Shahar, 2021). Thus, a reader without formal education can become a scholar.

Readers, particularly those who read extensively, are knowledgeable people (Erlina et al., 2019, as cited in Yen, 2023). They play a pivotal role in driving a country's economic development. As Heng (2023) defined, a knowledge-based

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society is one that relies on knowledge to propel economic growth and productivity. In this sense, the more readers a country produces, the more its economy can grow rapidly (Kingdom & Maekae, 2013, as cited in Yen, 2023).

### *Reading as a mould to shape a knowledge-based society*

The structure of a society is shaped by its people. If people are addicted to social media, value materialism, admire wealth, and respect only powerful people, then society will be moulded in that shape. By contrast, when people are fond of books, value reading, and respect knowledgeable people, then there is no doubt that the entire society is turned into a knowledge-based society. Heng (2021) noted that the Khmer Rouge was the primary cause that demolished Cambodian society because numerous intellectuals were killed during the regime. This means that intellectuals play a crucial role in shaping Cambodian society. In this regard, like true writers who spend much time reading, true intellectuals are true readers as well. Reading produces intellectuals who pave the way for building a knowledge-based society (Heng, 2021).

### *Reading as an elevator to uplift academic achievement*

Reading habits have a strong correlation with academic performance (Acheaw, 2014; as cited in Sun, 2019). A study by Sun (2019) showed that 82% or 94 students from private and public universities in Cambodia believed that reading habits remarkably impacted their academic performance. High school students in the US who are active readers have greater reading comprehension and general knowledge, allowing them to perform better on exams compared to their classmates who are non-readers (Auld, 2019). Another study by Hawkins (2016, as cited in Saucedo, 2023) showed that students who love reading for pleasure have better performance in some subjects, such as English, science, mathematics, and history. It is evident that reading helps students increase the likelihood of their academic success.

### *Reading as a rubber band to broaden our knowledge*

In addition to producing human resources for economic growth, shaping a knowledge-based society, and increasing students' academic performance, reading is a powerful tool for expanding people's knowledge. As Mengly J. Quach, the founder of Mengly J. Quach Education, wrote, "Reading is the best way to help people gain comprehensive knowledge and brain development.

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That is, the more people read, the more they will have a long-term vision, good ideas, high creativity, rational thinking, especially make their brains smarter" (Quach, 2018, p. 87). Reading for pleasure allows children to expand their vocabulary, improve their spelling, and make dramatic progress in mathematics (Sullivan & Brown, 2013). According to Tracy and Chee (2013), if a person spends a considerable amount of time reading each day, it will translate into about one book a week or about 50 books a year. This means that reading 30–60 minutes consistently over three, five, or ten years will provide a person with a wealth of knowledge. If we want to absorb knowledge broadly and dramatically, the best way is to engage ourselves with reading (Jrelibrary, n.d.).

## *Reading as a compass to direct our destiny*

Charles Tremendous Jones, a motivational speaker, reputedly said, "What you will become in five years will be determined by what you read and who you associate with." (Maxwell, 2012, p. 34). In this regard, reading is a powerful force that transforms a person from where he or she is to where he or she will be. How does it happen? Many readers may find authors convincing because their ideas, suggestions, research studies, stories, and insights in the books resonated with them. Authors can become role models who remarkably influence their lives and decisions. This leads readers to take the actions that shape their future.

Reading → Ideas → Actions → Transformation → Destiny

## *Reading as a saw to sharpen our minds*

In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,* author Stephen R. Covey stressed the awkwardness of the great majority of people who finished their formal education and ignored their continuous learning (Covey, 2013). One of the best ways to sharpen our minds and master our brains to a high level is by reading as many books as possible. As we spend time reading on a daily basis, we will be more mature, more mindful, and more insightful. We will become a new version of ourselves. As American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The mind, once stretched by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions" (Ben-Shahar, 2021, p. 90). A caterpillar, once becoming a butterfly, cannot go back to being a caterpillar.

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### *Reading as a passport to transport us to new places*

Through reading, especially books, we can learn about people, places, and stories we have never come across firsthand. Blue Zones, for example, are areas where people can live longer than other people in the world (Ben-Shahard, 2021). There are five Blue Zones: Ikaria in Greece, Okinawa in Japan, Loma Linda in California, the Mediterranean island in Italy, and Nicoya in Costa Rica (Ben-Shahar, 2021). The longevity of the residents in Blue Zones is the result of their lifestyle: a healthy diet, regular physical activity, lots of rest, and connection with friends (Ben-Shahar & Ridgway, 2017). I have never left my country, Cambodia, but how can I know about Blue Zones? It is the result of my daily engagement with books. Reading can introduce me to eminent individuals I have never met, send me to superb places I have never been to, and communicate to me historical events taking place long ago.

### *Reading as an accelerator to increase comprehension and critical thinking*

According to Grant (2023), people improve their critical thinking and comprehension through reading more than listening. In one experiment mentioned by Grant (2023), the experimenter conducted a study by assigning students to go through a science article for 20 minutes. Half of the students were randomly required to listen to the article; the other half were assigned to read it. Two days later, all the students were quizzed about the article. The result revealed that the listeners scored 59%, whereas the readers could score 81%. As listening is a skill for improving our intuitive thinking, reading is an accelerator to increase our comprehension. When it comes to critical thinking, there is no substitute for reading because it gives readers the space to slow down to contemplate the core ideas on the pages (Grant, 2023).

### *Reading as a medicine to heal our negative emotions and mental illnesses*

Each time we come across something new, our brains release endorphins, making us feel more interested and excited. This is precisely true for bookworms. They like reading books, not because of the books themselves but because they feel joyful and thrilled once they learn new concepts. Researchers have found that reading can support and improve mental health (Lynch, 2023). For college students, reading for pleasure could reduce their psychological distress, and it could develop resilience and well-being for elders (Lynch, 2023).

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It was also found that reading could even make people feel less lonely and live longer. Reading can also reduce people's stress and make them happier. One study by Rizzolo et al. (2009, as cited in Brecher, n.d.) showed that 30 minutes of reading could minimize blood pressure, heart rate, and feelings of psychological distress.

### *Reading as a candle to brighten our lives*

In her book, *Reading with Patrick*, Michelle Kuo tells her story about when she was a volunteer for Teach for America (Kuo, 2017). Shortly after her graduation, Michelle Kuo, who was a Harvard University graduate, decided to work as a volunteer for Teach for America. She arrived in a remote area of Helena, Arkansas. The area was filled with violence, gangs, drug deals, and unsafety. Over there, she met some at-risk and vulnerable students, particularly Patrick, who was a Grade 8 student. Inspired by Patrick's story, Michelle was dedicated to making a difference in her student's life. Patrick started to improve under Michelle's mentorship. Nevertheless, Michelle felt pressure from her parents, who wanted her to leave her volunteer job to attend law school. She ultimately quit her job as a volunteer. A few years later, on her law school graduation day, Michelle learned that Patrick was imprisoned for murder. She returned to Helena to continue Patrick's education. Every day for seven months, Michelle went to teach Patrick in jail. They read novels, poems, and history. Day by day, Patrick grew confident and became a reader (Kuo, 2017).

Michelle Kuo recognized the value of reading good books. She did not choose speaking, listening, or writing to educate Patrick because she knew that good books are candles to brighten people's lives. A good book is like a guru. In Sanskrit, the term "Gu" means darkness, and "Ru" means dispel (Sharma, 2019). Thus, a guru or a good book is capable of dispelling the darkness and bringing a bright future for people. As education activist Malala Yousafzai remarked, "Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world." (Maxwell & Hoskins, 2021, p. 46).

### Strategies to develop a reading habit

The Cambridge Dictionary defines the word 'habit' as something we do regularly, and sometimes we do it without realizing we are doing it (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Sean Covey, the author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens,*

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asserted that habits are the behaviors we do repeatedly (Covey, 1998). Similarly, James Clear, the author of *Atomic Habits*, explained, "A habit is a routine or behavior that is performed regularly - and, in many cases, automatically" (Clear, 2018, p. 6). Drawing on these three explanations, we can tell that when reading becomes a habit in our lives, we read books on a daily basis and do it automatically without spending time to think about it.

How long does it take to build a new habit? This is a common question because most people want a quick fix and results. Sharma (2006) boldly claimed that developing a new habit takes people 21 days. However, whether it needs 21, 31, or 101 days does not matter. What precisely counts is the repetition of the habit we are building (Clear, 2018). The more frequently we repeat a behavior, the more likely it is to become a habit. As shown in Figure 1, Point A refers to the new habit we desire to develop. It requires much effort and intense focus. Once we repeat that action several times, we will move from Point A to Point B. This means that the action requires less effort for our performance. As we keep repeating the action long enough, we will pass the habit line and reach Point C. Beyond this threshold, the action is completed easily and automatically. Finally, we form a new habit. Clear's (2018) explanation of this point is very vital. When it comes to forming any habit, the number of repetitions is much more important than the number of days. For example, two people endeavor to build a reading habit. One person chooses to read once a day, and the other chooses to read twice a day, in the morning and at night. After a month, the latter person seems to be achieving a higher level of achievement. Our objective is to develop a reading action until it passes the habit line and reaches Point C.

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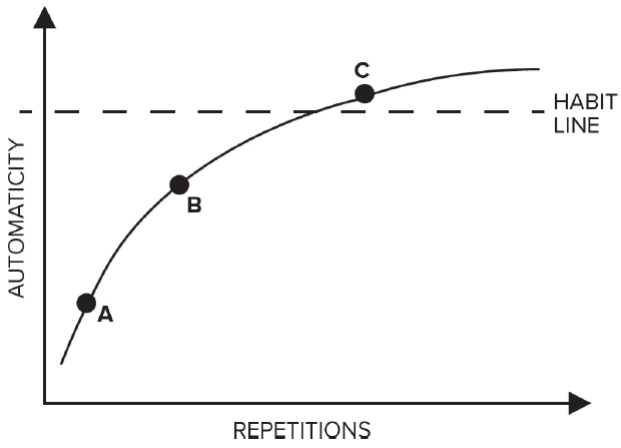



*Figure 1*. The habit line
Source: Maxwell and Hoskins (2021, p. 137)

When I started my teaching career, I often had problems with classroom management because my people skills were so weak that I could not work well with my students. My solution was to go out and ask other colleagues for their advice. During that time, I met two types of people. First, people who knew the ways but were unwilling to show me the ways because they did not want to share with me the secrets of their success. Second, people who were kind enough to share their ideas because they wanted to help me. However, the second group of people could provide me with only a few practical concepts, which were not sufficient for me to apply in my classroom. This defining moment disappointed me, but it also offered me an opportunity. It was an opportunity because it reinforced my desire to seek ways by myself. I went to a local bookstore to find a good book. Fortunately, I walked across *How to Win Friends and Influence People,* written by Dale Carnegie. It cost me only $2.8, but it has helped me in relationships for many years. Since then, I have seen the power of reading books and have been convinced that reading good books can change people's lives. In the following part, I will use the concepts in *Atomic Habits* by James Clear, supported by my personal experience, as recommendations on how to build a reading habit.

## *Be specific*

When building a new habit, having a clear intention is more important than being motivated. This statement is supported by the results of a study conducted with 248 people by researchers in Great Britain (Clear, 2018). All the participants were divided into three groups. The first group was a control

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group. Participants in this group were simply asked to record how often they exercised. The second group was a 'motivation' group. As the name implies, participants were asked to track their workouts but were also motivated by reading about the benefits of exercising. They were even told by researchers that exercise could improve their heart health. Finally, the participants in the third group received information to motivate them that was equal to that in the second group. Additionally, they were asked to fill out this sentence: "During the next week, I will partake in at least 20 minutes of vigorous exercise on [DAY] at [TIME] in [PLACE]." The results demonstrated that 35 to 38 percent of participants in the first and second groups exercised at least once a week. Interestingly, 91 percent of the participants in the third group could exercise at least once a week. These are shown in Figure 2.

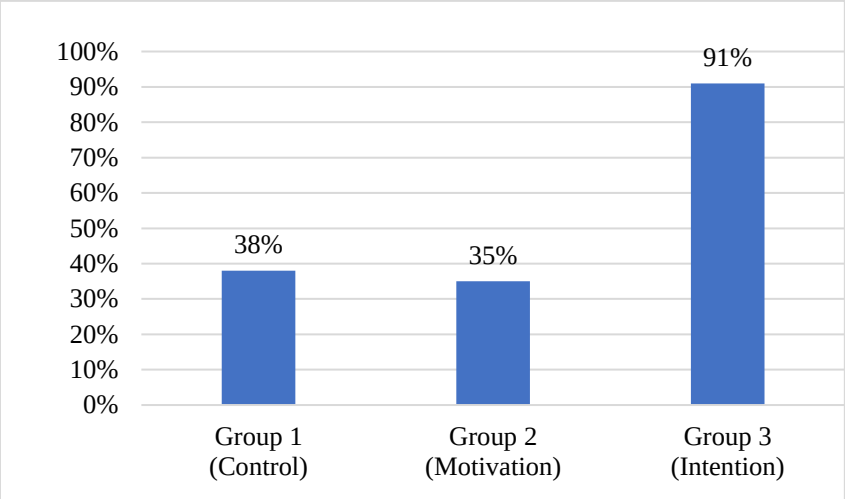



*Figure 2.* Percentage of participants who exercised at least once a week
Source: Clear (2018)

Researchers called the sentence completed by those participants in Group 3 an *implementation intention*. It refers to a plan we make in advance about when and where to perform an action. Based on the study, Clear (2018) recommended a formula we can fill out to form any new habit, as follows:

I will [BEHAVIOR] at [TIME] in [LOCATION]

It can look like this as we intend to apply the implementation intention to form a reading habit.

I will read a self-help book for 30 minutes at 6 a.m. in my bedroom.

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### *Use habit stacking*

The Diderot Effect states that when we buy a new thing, it creates a spiral of consumption that leads us to buy additional possessions (Clear, 2018). For example, when we buy a T-shirt, we tend to buy jeans and another belt to match it. After we buy a new iPhone, it leads us to purchase headphones and a case. Human behaviors are consistent with this cycle. After we get or finish something, we will get another thing done. This tendency is important when it comes to building a new habit. We can connect a new habit we want to build with the current one. It is called *habit stacking*. We form a new habit by taking advantage of the old one. The formula for relating a new habit to the old one is stated below.

> "After I [CURRENT HABIT], I will [NEW HABIT]."

It will look like this if we use the habit stacking to form a reading habit.

> After I eat dinner, I will spend 30 minutes reading a self-help book.

Or we can make it into a positive version of the Diderot Effect.

> After I get up at 5:30 a.m., I will make a cup of coffee.
> After I make a cup of coffee, I will spend 30 minutes reading a self-help book.
> After I read a self-help book, I will file the lessons and good quotes from the book.

### *Start with small stuff*

Years ago, I went to the gym to build up my muscles. On the first day, I spent a few hours lifting weights, and as a result, I suffered terribly from muscle aches. My burning desire to get a quick result made me fall short and demotivated. As industrialist Ian MacGregor observed, "I work on the same principle as people who train horses. You start with low fences, easily achieved goals, and work up. It's important in management never to ask people to try to accomplish goals they can't accept" (Maxwell, 2022, p. 73).

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For me, when I approached a newspaper, I noticed that I enjoyed reading it. I then asked myself why I poured myself into the newspaper. The answer lies in two things. First, most articles are short, which makes me want to finish them quickly. Second, there are a variety of stories that hinder me from getting bored. Starting small with simple stuff is a good way to build reading habits in the long run because it gives us incremental wins and momentum (Maxwell, 2022).

### *Practice extensive reading over intensive reading*

There are two types of reading: extensive and intensive. First, extensive reading is the reading in which a person can select any reading materials he or she wants to read (Key Differences, 2020). In the classroom, teachers motivate students to read any text or book they are intrigued by to improve their language and satisfy themselves (Harmer, 2007a). As a result, students enjoy their reading activity. Extensive reading often takes place outside the classroom, and it involves reading for pleasure or joyful reading (Harmer, 2007b). Second, intensive reading is the reading in which students read a text or passage in detail to complete tasks. Students need to use a few skills, such as skimming and scanning, in this type of reading. Moreover, they also analyze the text to gain comprehension in order to answer the questions after reading it (Key Differences, 2020). When I look back at my reading habits and reading materials, it is obvious that I went through a lot of extensive reading. Interestingly, research showed that extensive reading is as good as or even better than intensive reading (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009).

### *Practice slow-reading over speed reading*

In 2020, I developed a keen interest in research about what makes great companies by author and speaker Jim Collins. My intense curiosity to learn what makes great companies skyrocketed, triggering me to double or triple my speed reading. Soon thereafter, I encountered a quote from philosopher Henry David Thoreau, who said, "Life is too short to be in a hurry" (Ben-Shahar, 2021, p. 95). It is like a punch in my face. Quantity is unable to outweigh quality when it comes to learning. I learned that speed reading is good, but slow reading is more significant than speed-reading. Slow reading, according to Ben-Shahar (2021), is deep learning. We should slowly read something multiple times until we deeply grasp everything about it. It is interesting to note that slow-reading offers readers three benefits (Ben-Shahar, 2021). First, slow reading provides them with a great deal of joy and pleasure. Second, it helps them become more

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successful in other areas of their life. Third, it positively affects their relationships.

## *Apply important reading skills*

If we have taken high-stakes tests, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), we would realize that we need to practice some reading skills to do the test quickly because the time is limited for the test takers. Learning and practicing a few reading skills, such as scanning and skimming, can help readers retain information and help researchers seek the right sources for their research study (University of Idaho Writing Center Resources, 2022). Below are three reading skills that we can practice every time we interact with a book.

### *Previewing*

Previewing is what to look at and read to collect information before readers make themselves available for a book. It takes readers only a few minutes to preview, yet the outcome is incredible because it allows readers to get some ideas in the book and understand the concepts quickly (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 1996). To preview a book, readers have to look at the title and author(s), read the description or overview of the book, scan the Table of Contents, and ask if they want to read that book or not. I often preview a book before I decide to buy it. I Google the book on www.amazon.com, read the author's biography, went through the Table of Contents, and read the description or summary of the book.

### *Annotating*

Annotating is the interaction between a reader and a text to make the reading more interesting and enjoyable. Annotating ensures that a reader understands the concepts after reading (Writers' Center, 2024). To annotate a text, readers need to use a highlighter to color the main points, a pen to underline the unfamiliar words and write the meanings at the margin, and write a question mark at the place they do not understand so that they can come to reread it next time.

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*Summarizing*

Summarizing is to express or write the most important facts or ideas about what readers learned in a short and clear form. Adam Grant, the author of *Hidden Potential*, advised readers to take a 10-minute break, then summarize and share it with someone. In doing so, readers can maintain their knowledge and improve their writing.

## *Read what you like and impress you*

We seem to enjoy learning the subjects we like and focus on them longer than the subjects we dislike. What subjects are we interested in? What skills do we want to improve? What stories motivate us to keep moving forward in the face of adversities? What ideas create a sense of urgency within us, push us to wake up early, and consistently implement them? Our answers to these questions are important for us to pursue our genuine interests. Another way to make a discovery of our interests is by practicing the concept of "Try a lot of stuff and keep what works" (Collins & Porras, 2005, p. 140). For reading, it means that we try to read a variety of articles or books and keep only what catches our interest. These are some topics that ignited and motivated me to read: blue ocean strategy, leadership, Blue Zones, psychological safety, and being happier. One crucial contribution to building our reading habits is finding topics we are interested in and digging deep into them.

## *Practice the 20/5 rule*

I learned this idea from an ophthalmologist. I have applied this rule because I was diagnosed with dry eyes, making it impossible for me to read a book for a long time at once. The 20/5 rule states that we spend 20 minutes reading and 5 minutes relaxing. This rule of thumb gives readers two benefits. First, it protects their eyes from burning or drying. Second, during the period of a five-minute break, readers can reflect on the lessons they read in the previous 20 minutes. An experiment showed that relaxing 10 minutes after students learned something helped improve their recall by 10 to 30 percent (Grant, 2023). After one day of learning, the information started to fade away (Grant, 2023).

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## *Be in the happy zone*

According to the pioneering psychologist of flow, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, flow is "a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience is so enjoyable that people will continue to do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it." (Oppland, 2016). People experience flow when they enjoy doing a task and do it very well simultaneously (Ben-Shahar, 2007). Based on this discovery, people experience flow when they are reading an interesting book, watching an unpredictable movie, playing a musical instrument in an orchestra, and drawing or painting a work of art. In a mixed-ability class, schoolteachers may notice that some students are anxious or perplexed when the level of the lesson exceeds their ability. Some students, in stark contrast, become victims of boredom because the lesson is too easy for them. These two issues take place because the students do not experience flow.

Figure 3 shows that when the level of skill is higher than the level of difficulty, people feel bored; when the level of skill is lower than the level of difficulty, people feel anxious.

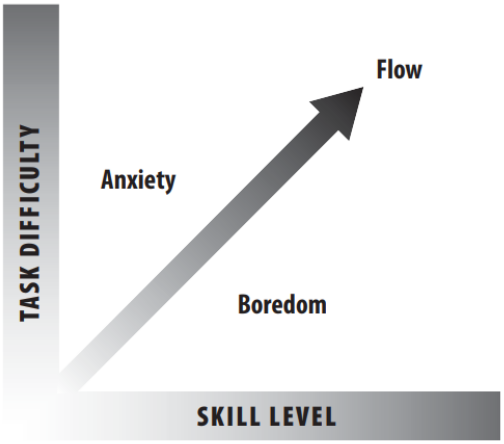



*Figure 3*. The conditions of flow
Source: Ben-Shahar (2007, p. 87)

The solution to this problem is that teachers must organize lessons and tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult for the students. In this regard, it is worthwhile for readers to notice that they need to be carefully selective about the books they are going to read. If their reading ability is at the elementary level, they should not choose a book at the basic or advanced level. In short,

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readers need to observe themselves every time they interact with a book. If they get bored or anxious with their reading, readers must increase the challenge bar or decrease the difficulty in order to bring them back to experience flow.

## *Extract as many lessons as we can and file them for future use*

The 80/20 rule states that 20 percent of the books contain 80 percent of the content (Maxwell, 2018). Readers' job is to extract the essentials from the books they read. Annotating, as discussed above, is the interaction between a reader and the book to make reading more interesting. One more way I engage myself with the book is by writing some codes on the key points in the book. As shown in Table 1, when I read a book, I always use these codes for insightful quotes, new lessons, practical ideas, interesting or funny stories, research studies, and sentences or paragraphs that motivate me.

Table 1. *Codes for noting key points when reading books*

| Code | Word |
|---|---|
| Q | Quote |
| L | Lesson |
| I | Idea |
| S | Story |
| R | Research |
| EN | Encouragement |

After reading, I can come back and start to file them. I jot down good quotes on index cards and put them by subjects such as mindfulness, determination, self-improvement, priority, generosity, and so on. I also write down the lessons, ideas, stories, and research studies with the page numbers next to them on four papers and then keep them in the book. When I am in need of ideas for writing an article, it takes me no more than five minutes to scan for them. Skilled readers recognize that resources contain little significance unless they can extract useful and valuable information from them.

## *Find reading partners*

I must admit that when I began building my reading habits, I did not have a partner. It was a solo journey full of errors, mistakes, and sometimes,

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disappointment, but I did not give up. I have kept making an effort until today. Still, we should embark on our reading process with reading partners. It is logical when one plus one equals two. However, when it comes to partnership, one plus one can result in more than two. Studies have proven that this tendency is right. A champion-caliber horse alone has the energy to pull a sled of 4,500 pounds (Maxwell & Hoskins, 2021). Once we teamed up this horse with another one, they both could pull a sled weighing up to 12,000 pounds. The partnership principle can double or triple productivity. For example, when geese gather to fly together in formation, the entire flock can fly 71 percent further than the solo goose (Covey, 1998).

According to Grant (2023), spending time learning with other knowledgeable people could elevate growth. In the US intelligence agencies, the best predictor for a productive team is how often its members teach and coach one another. One of the powerful ways to learn is by teaching others what we have learned because it offers opportunities for us to recall learning, which results in better memory. This is called the "tutor effect" in a psychological term (Grant, 2023).

### *Become an independent reader*

British child psychologist, Donald Winnicott, introduced an important concept regarding parenting: 'The good enough mother.' The good enough mother did not always make herself available for children. She was not quick to help children when they faced challenges or roadblocks. She let the children try to find solutions to problems by themselves. As a result, children learned to deal with difficulties by themselves and grew up to become independent adults. This does not mean that the good enough mother did not care for or love her children. She offered help and supported children whenever they could not handle their problems independently (Ben-Shahar, 2021).

The "good enough mother" concept can also be applied to the development of a reading habit. Our ultimate goal in cultivating our reading habits is to become independent readers. It is a pleasure and gratitude when teachers, parents, mentors, and other stakeholders provide us with scaffolding, but it is more important to travel on the road alone because, after all, it is impossible for them to stay by our side forever.

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## Conclusion

Reading offers people many benefits. It guarantees students' academic success, shapes the structure of society, relieves emotional exhaustion, enriches people's knowledge, opens a window to the new world, and lightens people's lives. To build a reading habit, we need to begin with simple and small stuff, practice a few important skills, seek our interest topics, use the tutor effect, and eventually learn to become independent readers. It is important to note that cultivating a reading habit is a hard and long process. We need to spend money buying reading materials. Then, we need to take our time from our busy schedules to flip through books, page by page. However, the payoff from our consistency and determination is enormous, and it will become one of the best experiences in our lives.

In conclusion, I hope that the strategies for developing a reading habit discussed above can help produce as many independent readers as possible. In addition, when we are successful, we should share the strategies with other people so that the number of readers will multiply, which is beneficial for our society and country.

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