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No Impact Man

By Colin Beavan

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20 Simple Ways to Become A Bookworm

Becoming a better reader is easier than you think.

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20 Simple Ways to Become a Bookworm

Written by Leo of [Zen Habits](#)154 diggs 

A top goal for many people is reading more books. And while it seems like an easy enough goal, it seems that it can be difficult with all of life's distractions.

Reading can be a pleasure like no other, especially when you discover a fantastic author or an imaginative new world. You can cuddle up with a good book on a weekend or rainy day, become life-long friends with a great character, lose yourself in the worlds created by books.



If reading more books is a goal of yours, there are some easy and simple things you can do to encourage a life-long reading habit. Follow these tips, and you'll soon have a list of books you've read that goes on forever.

1. **Make it a habit.** If you can install a new habit to read at certain times of the day, no matter what, even if it's just for 10 minutes at a time, you'll end up reading a ton of books over the course of a year. For example, make it a habit to read with breakfast and lunch, when you use the bathroom, and when you go to bed. If you do 10 minutes at a time, you'll have 40 minutes a day, or nearly 5 hours a week. If you ride public transit, read while you're waiting and while you're on the bus or train. Make it a daily habit, and it will add up. This is the surest way to read more books.
2. **Keep a reading list.** Either in a notebook, on a wiki, or some other document on your computer, keep a simple list of books you want to read. Add to it every time you hear of a good book, or read a good review. This running list will keep you motivated keep reading more.
3. **Keep a book log.** Along those lines, also keep a log of all the books you read. If you want to be detailed, write the book title, author, the date you started and the date you completed it. Even more, you can write a short note about how you liked the book. If all of that's too much trouble, just keep a list of the books you read and maybe the date you finished them.
4. **Set a challenge.** Make a challenge for yourself -- say one book a week, or 40 books in a year. Something achievable, but a challenge. Make it a public challenge, announcing it on your blog or to friends and family, and give everyone your weekly progress report. You'll push yourself

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Blog Action Day



to meet the challenge, and find ways to do it.

5. **Cut back on online reading.** If you're reading a lot of stuff online, you probably don't have enough time to read books. If you cut your online reading by just 30 minutes (I'm not saying to ditch it completely), you'll have time to read for half an hour a day. That adds up.
6. **Join a book club.** Most areas have some sort of book club -- look online, in your local newspaper, or at your local library for a book club near you. If you can't find one, organize one with friends, family and neighbors who are interested in books. A book club will get you motivated to read, and help you find recommendations for great books, and perhaps an easy way to swap good books with people in your area.
7. **Join an online forum.** Along those lines, there are many online forums for book lovers -- just do a Google search. Join one, participate, list your favorite books and authors, read those of others, talk books. It's a lot of fun, and you'll get support to form your reading habit.
8. **Limit TV watching.** If you watch hours of television every day, you won't be able to read many books. Cut your TV time in half (for example), to free up time for reading.
9. **Join Bookmooch.** Try [Bookmooch](#) for a great way to swap books. List the books you're willing to mail to people, and then list the books you want. If someone requests a book, you mail it at your cost. If someone has a book you want, you get it mailed to you for free.
10. **Carry your book always.** This is one of the most important tips if you want to read more books: anywhere you go, bring your book with you. If you leave the house, put your book in the car. That way, if you have any waiting time, you've got your book to keep you company.
11. **Find inspiration.** Read blogs by book lovers. There are many. These book lovers will describe books in such a way as to make you want to read them. They'll talk about their favorite authors. It's inspiring, and it'll motivate you to read.
12. **Get great recommendations.** Find others who love the books you love, and see what else they recommend. A great way to do that is through [Library Thing](#), a service where you list the books you own, give them ratings and reviews, and get recommendations for other books.
13. **Read books you can't put down.** While you may be ambitious and want to tackle all of the classics, if those go a little too slowly for you, put them down and come back to them later. Instead, find a real page-turner. It doesn't matter what kind of book it is, as long as it's a book you love to read and can't put down. For me, that's writers like Stephen King and John Grisham and Tom Clancy or Robert Ludlum or Sue Grafton. I'll stay up all night reading one of their books.
14. **Always have books to read.** You should never finish a book and not have another book lined up. I like to have at least 5 lined up, so I don't have to worry about it. Have your lineup of books stacked to one side of your bookshelf, so you always know what's on deck.
15. **Read books that make you laugh.** Humorous books are good books, in my opinion. They're fun, and they can poke fun at some of the things we normally take seriously. And they make you want to read them. Find a funny author and go with him. My favorites are Douglas Adams and Terry Pratchett and Mark Twain and David Sedaris.
16. **Connect with your passions.** What do you love, and what do you love to do? If you read about it online, it's probably something you love to read about. Think about what those topics are, and find a good fiction novel about it. You're more likely to keep reading if you love the topic.
17. **Get into a series.** Once I hit on a book I love, if it's part of a series, I try to read the whole series (if I can find all the books). Start to finish is best, but sometimes it doesn't matter. Series are a great way to keep reading.
18. **Finish your book before starting another.** One bad habit I broke a few years ago was starting one book, putting it down, and then starting another, thinking I'll read them both at the same time. It doesn't usually work. I often don't come back to the first book, and usually don't finish it. If you start a book and it's a dud, go ahead and abandon it. But if it's a keeper, try to finish it before moving on.
19. **Become a library lover.** There's no better resource for book lovers than the local public library. It's full of great books, new and old, and it's free. It's free! Go there, and enjoy the

time you spend there.

20. **Get to love used book stores.** Second best, next to the library, are your local used bookstores. There aren't a lot of them in my area (just one, actually, not counting a thrift shop), so it is one of my favorite places to go. I usually take a stack (or a box) of my old books, sell them, and use the credit to get a bunch of new ones.

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Posted on September 4, 2007

154

diggs

[digg it](#)

Library Thing RULES!

Submitted by Anonymous on Fri, 09/07/2007 - 19:09.

I took your suggestion and checked out that site. It's addicting! I have a list now of 20 books that sound really interesting. Went from there to another great site, www.paperbackswap.com. Three new books are already on their way to me. So excited! Thanks for the great tip.

[reply](#)

reading lists are anti-motivational

Submitted by Anonymous on Thu, 09/06/2007 - 08:59.

There are over 175,000 books published in the US alone, each year. EACH YEAR. For an intellectually-curious and voracious reader, it's easy to create a never-ending reading list. And looking at a very, very long reading list is much like looking at a very, very long to-do list: it's anti-motivational and sometimes just plain depressing.

I stopped keeping a reading list a few years ago. Since then, I've just kept a book log. That way I can see what I've accomplished, plus remind myself down the road of what I was reading during a particular year.

-theorist @ www.fadetheory.com
a blog about books, inside and out

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reading lists are anti-motivational

Submitted by Anonymous on Thu, 09/06/2007 - 08:56.

There are over 175,000 books published in the US alone, each year. EACH YEAR. For an intellectually-curious and voracious reader, it's easy to create a never-ending reading list. And looking at a very, very long reading list is much like looking at a very, very long to-do list: it's anti-motivational and sometimes just plain depressing.

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-theorist @ www.fadetheory.com
a blog about books, inside and out

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Book log & reading list via citeulike.org

Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 09/05/2007 - 19:39.

(re-posting because it doesn't seem to have gone through)

Have you heard of [Citeulike](#)? It's a social bookmarking site for print sources, intended to automatically produce bibliographies for academic papers.

It scrapes Amazon (or any of several other sources) for bibliographic data when you press a bookmarklet button, and it's designed to track how much you want to read it & whether you already have. It would be super easy to keep both the log and the reading list on that site.

I keep an account for my professional reading & one for my own personal use. It helps with collaboration, and I'm certain it would work for a book club too.

[reply](#)

[Book log & reading list via citeulike.org](#)

Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 09/05/2007 - 19:33.

Have you heard of [Citeulike](#)? It's a social bookmarking site for print sources, intended to automatically produce bibliographies for academic papers.

It scrapes Amazon (or any of several other sources) for bibliographic data when you press a bookmarklet button, and it's designed to track how much you want to read it & whether you already have. It would be super easy to keep both the log and the reading list on that site.

I keep an account for my professional reading & one for my own personal use. It helps with collaboration, and I'm certain it would work for a book club too.

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[Well you inspired me to](#)

Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 09/05/2007 - 18:44.

Well you inspired me to gather together all the books I've bought but not read yet and put them in a to read stack. Oddly there's an equal number of fiction and non fiction, so think I'll alternate. Right now I'm reading non fiction - Stephen King's On Writing - so a novel is next on the menu.

I'm also vowing that - aside from the new Terry Pratchett that's due out soon, because ya know, it's Terry Pratchett - I'm not buying anything new until I'm at least two thirds of the way down the stack! I'll make a note of things that sound good, and stick them on my Amazon wish list for example, but they'll still be there to buy once I've made a big dent in the outstanding stack. And they aren't sitting there oppressing me with their "not read" status.

I'll definitely use some of those tips to make more time to read. I know I can read a lot when I put my mind to it. Yes, I'm one of the nuts who read Deathly Hallows in one day (10.5 hours to be precise) and one time I was laid up with a sprained ankle I read five books in five days. Just got to make the time.

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[I keep a 'to read' list in](#)

Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 09/05/2007 - 15:01.

I keep a 'to read' list in my PDA and it is quite useful. The other thing I did is, along with several other friends who not only read a lot but read interesting a varied books, we run blogs where we write 2 paragraph reviews of what we have read then, anyone else in the group can see what

the others are reading and maybe obtain ideas for their own 'to read' list.

[reply](#)

[I use the site listed below](#)

Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 09/05/2007 - 12:33.

This is a great site to go to for reading suggestions

<http://www.whatshouldireadnext.com/books/search?email=>

Robin

[reply](#)

[Check out AllConsuming](#)

Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 09/05/2007 - 07:25.

Great post, Leo!

There's one site that has made me enjoy reading even more: AllConsuming.net. It's nothing that fancy, just a place where you can tell the world what you are reading and what you have read lately.

The psychological thing there is that you get a small reward when you can tell the world that you've read one more book. As your list keeps growing, you get more and more proud about it - and want to read more to grow it more :)

[reply](#)

[dailylit.com](#)

Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 09/05/2007 - 07:13.

www.dailylit.com sends you one page of a book of your choice everyday via email or rss. It's great if you don't really have the time to read a book.

[reply](#)

[changing taste](#)

Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 09/05/2007 - 01:30.

>At the same time, don't be afraid to pick up something that you gave up years ago and try again. Your tastes do change, and something that was once pointless and overblown might now appeal to you.<

Yes. In school I hated the classics and read mostly science fiction if given a choice. Granted, whomever picks books for lit curricula ought to hang. 'A Separate Peace' and 'Silas Marner' have probably driven more kids away than we'll ever know. There are surely better ways to teach literary criticism and analysis. I even wonder at the choices to represent authors. Why 'The Pearl', a lackluster story, instead of 'Cannery Row', a masterpiece of place and character study, to showcase Steinbeck. For decades 'The Pearl' was the reason I would not read Steinbeck. Why 'The Secret Sharer' instead of 'Heart of Darkness'. I mean I admired Conrad's descriptive style in school, but when I read 'Heart', wow. My kids had to slog through the same books as me and hated many of them just as much. Some fool on the school board decided 40 years ago. No questions. Fortunately, many of the books I chose to read were Asimov, Heinlein, Bradbury, Herbert, LOTR, Adams, (even Voltaire and Whitman) and such. Books none of my teachers seemed to have ever read. Many required imagination, concentration, dedication and

command of the language. And I read a lot of them. That kind of exercise develops the habit and craving to have the words and images pass through the brain, assimilate, juice creativity. No drugs I know of approach. In my late 30's and early 40's I got a taste for Steinbeck, Hemingway, Shakespeare, Rand, Melville, Churchill, Foote... The stuff that had been eschewed in youth. I really got back into it listening to books on tape while commuting (Shakespeare is much better watched or listened than read the first time through). Most of what I read presently are lighter (3-12 hours), but no saying I won't pick up something meatier like Joyce when I have the time. I am fascinated by the Napoleonic period and have read all Forrester's Hornblower series, Cornwell's Sharpes series and O'Brian's Aubrey series books. I probably read 40 books a year now.

[reply](#)

audible

Submitted by Anonymous on Tue, 09/04/2007 - 23:47.

consume huge amounts of books in audible format. traffic jams, queues, etc, have all become reading time!

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If you want to read more...

Submitted by Anonymous on Tue, 09/04/2007 - 23:24.

just kill your TV

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Good post!

Submitted by Anonymous on Tue, 09/04/2007 - 20:34.

I love being an English student as I get to read alot. I was surprised in my first year though by how little people on the course had read.

Oh and you've listed some of my favourite authors up there, my best friend wasn't ever into reading until I loaned him my copies of 'Hitchhikers guide to the galaxy'... I never did get them back but now it's him who is suggesting the books to me!

[reply](#)

Don't be afraid to stop reading a book

Submitted by Anonymous on Tue, 09/04/2007 - 20:19.

I had Gravity's Rainbow sitting in my rack for the longest time. I'd sit down, start reading it, realize after two pages I had no idea what was going on, reread those two pages, then start to fight my way through the next page, and throw my hands up after twenty minutes. And the last thing I'd want to do after that is pick up another book.

When I was a kid, many people suggested I read Tolkien, so I started slogging through The Hobbit. I hated, hated, HATED it. There were pages upon pages where I'd skim and skim, just waiting for something to happen.

Both of these books (and several others) kept me from really reading for a long time. It took a lot for me to close them and put them in the donate pile, but once I made the decision to stop reading them, it was like a weight was lifted off my shoulders, and I could enjoy reading again.

At the same time, don't be afraid to pick up something that you gave up years ago and try

again. Your tastes do change, and something that was once pointless and overblown might now appeal to you.

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Good Reads

Submitted by Anonymous on Tue, 09/04/2007 - 20:17.

[This website](#) has helped me read more. It's pretty nifty.

[reply](#)

Download E-books from Your Library

Submitted by Anonymous on Tue, 09/04/2007 - 20:10.

Many libraries are beginning to offer audiobooks on mp3 available to check out and download. They expire after 10 days or so. What a great way to fill the time while commuting or waiting in line--and it saves a trip to the library to pick up books on CD (although this is still a great option). I wish I had discovered the vast resources of my local library sooner. Happy reading!

[reply](#)

talk about books

Submitted by Anonymous on Tue, 09/04/2007 - 18:05.

My favorite small talk topic is what people are reading. Sure, there are bound to be some duds amongst current reads, but if someone doesn't like what they're currently reading, they're usually more than delighted to tell me about a book they *did* enjoy.

And don't forget to talk to librarians and booksellers. Tell them the sorts of books you like and they probably have suggestions about what else you might want to check out. It's rare to work with books without also enjoying them, so don't pass up such a wealth of resources!

-sprite
spritewrites.net

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Books

Submitted by Anonymous on Tue, 09/04/2007 - 16:05.

I read a lot of books as a young man. A lot of books. Great books. As I grew older distractions got in the way of that heavenly experience. I remained a voracious online reader but that's not the same experience. Now I'm taking up a literature course and I'm reading more books again. The pleasure is unsurpassed. Nothing gives me as much joy as reading a great book.

I've got a ton of books lined up and I want to get back to the level of reading I did when I was younger.

Because no joy is greater than that which is shared I'm giving my goddaughter tons of books to read too. She loves them. I take pains not to implore her to read, I don't force anything. I just give her books. Another bookworm in the making with a life long love for the written word :).

[reply](#)

Read multiple books

Submitted by Anonymous on Tue, 09/04/2007 - 14:47.

I like to be in the middle of multiple books simultaneously. I've usually got the book I'm reading aloud to my kids after dinner, the book on my PDA for 24/7 access, a book next to my computer to read while booting or otherwise waiting, one paced with my reading group, and a tech book at work.

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