

30 TIMELESS TIPS

Read it Right

*A practical guide to be a
better reader*

MYZENITH PRESENTS

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*What a (wo)man can be,
(s)he must be.*

*Abraham Maslow, 1943**

*updated to represent 21st century values

Introduction

On the Importance of reading

Fulfilling one's potential is a fundamental necessity and source of joy in human existence. Maslow called this self-actualization: a state in which a person has become everything that he/she is capable of becoming.

Adapting this to the 21st century, where many of us are likely to live past a hundred years in a world of accelerating change, we like to think of reaching one's zenith not as a destination, but as a continuous journey of iterative growth.

There are of course, many ways to grow and strive towards one's full potential. It all starts with a good understanding of where you are as an individual and what you want to strive towards.

As children, most of us follow a system of education that structurally leads us to an elevated level of development in each academic year. As adults, we are free to chart our own course. The approaches, tools and methodologies available to us are many.

We at MyZenith believe that reading is one of the most accessible and most cost-effective (and in our humble opinion, pleasurable) ways of continuous betterment. If you want to consistently and productively work towards your own personal peak, reading needs to be the core of your repertoire.

Reading is the best way to relax, and even six minutes can be enough to reduce stress levels by more than two-thirds.

Read your stress away

Anything done with clarity of purpose has a better chance of succeeding. Read with a clear goal in mind, and you will reap more from it.

Read with purpose

Through reading, we begin to see other perspectives than our own and, at the same time, realize that we are not alone. We empathize.

Read for empathy

Good leaders tend to be good readers too. Reading makes us smarter, more creative and compassionate and better at self-management.

Read to lead

Humans crave connection. Reading is an act of connection – to the author, to our inner selves and to others around us.

Read to connect

Read with perspective

Seek out many perspectives, consider them all to form your own view. When appropriate, be willing and able to change your mind.

Read to be ready

In a fast-changing world, read to be able to see what is coming, and then to make the right decisions in light of the future ahead.

Read to your heart's desire

Reading is joy, solace and happiness. Read whatever it is that you desire. Read again that which had already captured your heart.

Read to learn, learn to read

“Read to learn” and “learn to read” are continuous parallel processes, which we need to improve with age, knowledge and technological advances.

Read to grow

We read to grow individually and collectively. As we read and grow, we make small steps of personal elevation, each making us a better person than we were.



On the Importance of reading well

Reading comes in many forms. From browsing to skimming to research-driven reading, the word has come to encompass a whole spectrum of activities – anything that takes inputs which are predominantly language-based can be classified as reading.

Nowadays, the formats are just as varied – paper books, e-books, audiobooks and new formats yet to be invented. Regardless of format or content, reading becomes powerful when it provides us with a means to distil data into information which in turn gets internalized as knowledge and eventually, wisdom.

Put simply, the more we read, the wiser we become. But it is not just about the quantity, but also the quality of reading. The more we read and the better we read, the wiser we become.

In this book we present 30 tips to help you to read more and become a better reader.

You don't have to practice all of them, you get benefits from applying some or even just one of them. Pick and choose the one(s) that work for you or helps you solve a specific challenge, and you will be well on your way to become a better reader and to reach the zenith of your potential.



**“To learn to read is to light a fire;
every syllable that is spelled out
is a spark.”**

— Victor Hugo

01

Read what you like

There are plenty of books out there, and I am convinced you will find the right one. It takes some effort, and it takes some deliberate searching and some trials and errors. But this is not an exam, you won't be judged. The important thing is to pick something that feels right for you, that is good for you, and helps you relax and rejuvenate.

02

Fill the empty spaces of a day

Have you ever tried accounting for the hours in your day?

Most of us know the big blocks we spend time on — work, food, commute, TV, sports and so on.

But there are many unfilled moments in a day — the times when we typically reach for our phone to do a quick browse of the news or social media feeds. Don't let them go to waste, turn towards a chosen book instead.

03

Find a reading nook

Find a nice cozy spot in your house and claim it as your reading nook. There is no better way to get started on your reading than to have a warm beckoning place to plonk yourself in, nurse a refreshing cup of tea (or a beverage of your choice) and let yourself get pulled into another world. Go on, scout around your home now and find an ideal spot.

0 *4*

Vary your reading approach

Each book requires a different reading approach. Here are 4:

- Skimming (to get a high level view on the main points)
- Slow Reading (to savour beautiful or literary reading)
- Associative Reading (to learn from a book, to connect dots)
- Deep research (to learn in depth about a topic)

Depending on your goal and the book, vary how you read.

05

Abandon good books for great books

There are gazillions of books out there, many more than anyone can hope to (or want to) read in their lifetime. To get the most out of your reading, you should be reading the best book for you at any given point in time. If you find a better book to read, abandon a good book for a great book. Of all the books out there, ask yourself, “which ones do I plan to read in my one wild and precious life?”

06

Sandwich your reading

If you are struggling to fit your reading into an already busy life, try the sandwich method. Find two activities in your daily routine that you do without fail, and fit time for reading between those two. If you do those two activities, make sure to read too. You wouldn't want to eat a sandwich without the filling, would you?

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.”

— Dr. Seuss



07

Make the book your own

A good read of a good book is a conversation between the author and the reader. Make each book your own by adding notes and highlights. You can read them back later, to savor a good sentence or relive the memory of a good story. Your own additions make each book unlike any other copy. It becomes a personal conversation between you and the author, unique in its own right.

08

Share your thoughts

Share what you read – not just the title or what it is about, but what it means for you. Whether it is with your family, friends, colleagues or neighbours, sharing your take on a book is a great way to get to know each other better. If you can't do this in person, find your favourite digital hangouts and social forums for books and share your thoughts generously.

Match the book to your context

Take the time to ask yourself, “what is it that my soul needs at the moment?” There is that one book that would give you solace, nourishment, joy. Browse your (digital and physical) bookshelves, let intuition take over, and pick a book that feels just right, no judgement allowed. Don’t find the book, let the book find you.

10

Choose one thing to give up

While many people would like to be well-read, most don't allocate time or priority to the activity of reading. We all have 24 hours in a day, most of it already full, often without realizing what we spend it on. If you examine your own day, what is it that you would give up in your day-to-day routine to make room for reading?

1 1

Use multiple formats

E-books, audiobooks, paperbacks, hardcover books – books nowadays come in multiple formats. With that comes the convenience of fitting a format to any context. Read a paperback while at home, switch to an e-book on a train, listen to an audiobook while you drive or cook. With multiple formats, you can read seamlessly in every context and always have a good read at hand.

1 2

Apply your reading

Applied Reading is the concept where the purpose of reading is not just for information or entertainment but for insights, decision or action. After every book or article you read, take a pause to translate its relevance to your own personal life or situation. Reflect on what you have learnt, and what you could use. Ask yourself – what was in it for me?



“One trouble with developing speed-reading skills is that by the time you realize a book is boring you’ve already finished it.”

— Franklin P. Jones

13

Reflect as you read

Reflective, or meditative reading, is a source of self-awareness. It allows us a safe haven to explore our inner selves: fiction allows us to examine harsh truths about ourselves through the stories of others, non-fiction provides us with insights or theories to explain our own struggles, which may otherwise seem impenetrable. Read with a mindset to explore your inner self.

1 4

Practice prosocial reading

We learn better when it is done in order to teach someone else. This approach called “prosocial learning” relies on the social networks of the brain and have been found to be more effective. Next time you read something, try and explain to someone else. You would read better, you help someone else, and you fulfil your brain’s primitive need to stay connected.

1 5

Connect with the authors

Writers of yesteryears were notoriously recluse. Today though, most writers have an active internet presence and engage with their readers. Regardless of whether this has any effect on making you a better reader or not, it is fun when famous authors reply to your messages. The more fun it is, the more you read!

16

Form an independent perspective

We consume information throughout the day, whether it is from a book, a longform article or short snappy news. We assume that learning more makes us better informed. Optimistic, but sadly untrue. To see the world as it is, and not as others want us to see it, requires a rather uncommon skill of putting things in perspective. Simply put, learn to make up your own mind.

17

Retain plasticity of perspective

Children find it easy to learn and change their mind, most adults don't. As we age, our brains get fixed in its neural pathways. But it can be altered with deliberate effort. To grow as individuals, we need to be able to transform, to be surprised, to learn something new. As you read, stay open to novel perspectives, let your mind be changed, let yourself grow.

18

Seek heterogeneity of perspectives

We all live in bubbles of some sort. Algorithms dictate what we read and view based on what we liked before. Yet, in the future, the ability to know and hold differing perspectives will be critical for success and survival. Pull yourself out of the self-reinforcing mechanisms. Seek out viewpoints that are different from your own.

**“A book is a dream you hold in
your hand.”**

— Neil Gaiman



19

Read like a detective

Analytical reading has many similarities to solving a mystery. We can learn much from Sherlock Holmes: Define your question, keep an open mind, learn how to read relevant material, use logic, read between the lines, never underestimate a book, recognize vital facts and incidental facts. If you approach each page like a clue, soon the mysteries will be solved.

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Read it when you need it

Reading is most effective when there is a purpose to it, not as a vanity metric to hit a certain number of books in a specified period. It is also helpful to seek out books that answer your specific questions or help you out in the current context you are in. The more specific you can be, the better help a book will be.

2 1

Read yourself out of a rut

When you find yourself in a reading rut, perhaps because you are in the middle of a hard book or the noise around you is too hard to ignore, give yourself some permission to read whatever you feel like. Or to pick up whatever everyone else is reading, or talking about reading. Reading something is better than reading nothing.

22

Let your mind roam the world

To know the world is to love the world. Let your mind wander the world by picking a book about a place that you would love to visit. Or perhaps pick up a book about a place where you have already been and relive the memories. Read and let your mind roam around in places far away.

2 3

Review what you read

As you read, highlight passages, sentences or even just phrases that you find striking. Most e-books have a feature to add notes to your highlights too. Take the time occasionally to review your annotations. Repetition is one of the best ways to retain knowledge. The more often you review, the more you get out of your reading.

2 4

Make a not-to-read list

Read the right book at the right time. Sometimes it is not enough to find the right book, but also to avoid the wrong books, or books that are wrong for you at a given point in time. Create a not-to-read list, in order to make time in your schedule and space in your minds for the books you do want to and need to read.



**“Reading makes immigrants of
us all. It takes us away from
home, but more important, it
finds homes for us everywhere.”**

— Jean Rhys

25

Connect your reads

Making connections is how we learn. Connecting what we read with our prior experience changes our neural circuitry. Connecting the seemingly unconnected and drawing parallels across disparate subjects can also inspire creativity. As you read, connect the new knowledge to what you have read and learned before.

26

Optimize your reading workflow

Reading is a complex activity. An end-to-end reading workflow consists of at least five phases:

- Set your reading goals
- Plan your reads
- Read (absorb the material)
- Review and retain
- Apply what you read

Each of us will have specific needs and challenges. Review your workflow to optimize each phase to your needs and reading style.

27

Augment your reading

Technology has evolved significantly in recent times and “readTech” (tools and services to aid reading) has much to offer these days. As you review your end-to-end reading workflow, consider if any of the tools available out there could help you make reading more pleasurable and productive for you.

28

Quantify your reads

QuantifiedRead methodologies suggest tracking what you read and their contribution towards your personal goals. Use a journal or dashboard to document not just the titles, genres and authors you read, but also a progress score for each book – a measure of how much it advanced you towards your own personal goal, through increased information, understanding or transformation.

29

Chart your reading trajectory

Your reading trajectory indicates the progress you have made in your reading life – in terms of depth or breadth of reading material or your ability to capture more out of each read. Consider books you were reading at two different periods in your life and assess for yourself the progress you have made. Take that as a starting point to plan a reading journey into the future.

30

Contribute to collective progress

We are all on earth for a unique purpose. What is the specific field or topic that you are passionate about? Identify what it takes for you to be the person who pushes the boundaries of our collective understanding? Focused reading helps you build the required foundational knowledge, standing on which you can contribute to collective human progress.

**“The journey of a lifetime starts
with the turning of a page.”**

— Rachel Anders



Conclusion



Learn to Read, Read to Learn

Traditionally, learning to read has been thought to precede reading to learn. This approach assumed we learn how to read during the early years, usually up to 6-8 years of age. Beyond that any reading done is for learning and / or entertainment. We are expected to be proficient in the art of reading.

Recent studies have shown that this approach is not accurate. We don't stop learning to read at ages 6-8. In fact, adults continue to improve their reading skills throughout their life. Furthermore, technological advances have made old reading practices obsolete and introduced new ways to augment the way we read.

Knowledge follows a compounding principle. The more you invest in learning how to read, the better you get at it, thus setting in motion a virtuous cycle of personal growth and development. As adults, therefore, it is important to take the time to continue to improve the way we read.

We hope that this book has introduced you to some tips to be a better reader - to fit more reading into your life and get more out of what you read. This is best considered as a succinct introduction to the topic, more resources are listed at the end of the book.

Thank you for reading.



Resources

How to take your reading further

READ BETTER

Use MyZenith platform to consolidate, organize and connect your reading. Sign up at: myzenith.io

CONNECT WITH US

Let us know your thoughts and feedback. You can reach us via email at: reach@myzenith.io

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