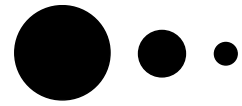


THE GROWTH MARATHON

One Stride At a Time



KNOWLEDGE

EMPATHY

WRITING

ON READING PT.3
HOW TO READ

MEMORY

ELOQUENCE

VOCABULARY

TGM



THE GROWTH MARATHON
— One Stride At a Time —



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Introduction

We have had a look at the origins of reading as well as its benefits and steps to take to understand what you have read (Check [Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)).

As touched on previously, it's important for you to know what you want to read (purpose), once you have that, your goal will determine how you read.

(Note: Every time I say reading, I mean "Active Reading", i.e., engaging with what you are reading.)

How to read a book

When it comes to reading for knowledge, the techniques presented in Mortimer Adler's "[How to read a book](#)" are useful. The book ultimately presents the reader with 4 levels of reading (it's worth a couple reads). These levels are cumulative i.e., to move to the next level you must be able to perform the previous level. Some of the levels provided require some effort, but if you want to get the most out of a book, accept internally that it'll require some effort on your part.

The four levels of reading are as follows:

1. **Elementary Reading:** This is the type of reading that helps us read words from a page and get a general understanding of what a book is trying to say. This is the most basic level of reading, taught around elementary school level, hence the name. If you read and understand this article you are already above this level.

2. **Inspectional Reading:** As indicated by the name, this level is about inspecting a book to figure out what its contents are about and have a general idea of what the author is trying to say. This is broken down into 2 sub-levels:

2.1 **Systematic Skimming:** You can use this to determine if a book is worth your time or not. You'll be provided with a holistic view of the book as well as how it is structured once you systematically skim through it. To perform a proper systematic skim, you need to be proactive, hence I've added questions you can answer when going through Adler's steps.

a) Read the title of the book as well as the name of the authors and anything else about them.

Q: What is the title of the book? What does it mean? Where would you put such a book in a library (categorize it)? What knowledge can you get from this book?

b) Have a look at the front and back cover (Remember, a lot of money goes into the design of a book cover).

Q: Does this cover represent anything?

c) Read the preface

Q: What is the purpose and scope of the book?

d) Read the table of content

Q: What is the general structure of the book? (Number of sections and sub-sections as well as their breakdown)

e) Read the index

Q: What is the range of topics covered in the book?

f) Skim through the first page and a few headings.

2.2 Superficial Reading: This involves quickly reading the whole book, without stopping to read up on a word or place or concept not understood. Just power through it. This allows you to have the bigger picture of the book, and from there you can figure out where you want to dive in detail, maybe the whole book or maybe just a few sections.

3. **Analytical Reading:** After doing your inspectional reading and you wish to dive fully into a book, you move to analytical reading. You'll need a pen and paper for this one (or a note-taking app). This level is about thorough reading of the text to fully understand the essence of the book. To be able to read at such a level, you need to read the text actively (i.e., your brain must be engaging with what you read). A good way to do that is by trying to answer some questions when you read.

Adler points out 4 sequential questions that must be answered by the reader as they are going through a book, and they are:

- a) What is the book about as a whole?
- b) What is being said in detail, and how?
- c) Is the book true, in whole or part?
- d) What is the significance of what has been proposed by the author?

Using the levels provided above, ensure you actively search for answers to these questions as you go through a book.

According to Adler, the stages of analytical reading are as follows:

- Classify the book according to kind and subject matter.
- State what the whole book is about with the utmost brevity.
- Enumerate its major parts in their order and relation and outline these parts as you have outlined the whole.
- Define the problem or problems the author is trying to solve.
- Come to terms with the author by interpreting their keywords.
- Grasp the author's leading propositions by dealing with his most important sentences.

- Know the author's arguments, by finding them in, or constructing them out of, sequences of sentences.
- Determine which of his problems the author has solved, and which he has not; and as to the latter, decide which the author knew he had failed to solve.

4. **Syntopical Reading:** If your objective is to understand a particular subject matter and have your own well-founded opinion, this is the level of reading required. It is the most difficult reading of all. It involves reading multiple books on a subject and comparing the arguments from the various authors. This is typical in academic writing. There are five steps to perform syntopical reading correctly:

- a) Finding the relevant passages: Inspect various books and find the passages that correspond to the subject you want to explore.
- b) Bringing the authors to terms: Identify the keywords of the authors and discover how they use them. This is an exercise in translation. Once you put everything in your terms it is easier to compare the ideas and concepts presented.
- c) Getting the questions clear: When comparing the different texts, have questions in mind for your subject matter and look for answers to those questions. Adler proposes three sets of questions in the following sequence:
 - The first set has to do with the existence or character of the phenomenon or idea we are investigating.
 - The next might have to do with how the phenomenon is known or how the idea manifests itself.
 - The final set might have to do with the consequences of the answers to the previous question.
- d) Defining the issues: If the authors disagree or answer the questions you formulated in different ways, then an issue has been identified. You need to pick out, define and arrange all issues that presented themselves when you were reading
- e) Analyzing the discussion: The objective here is to find the truth and determine what its significance is. You'll have to analyze the similar and opposing views of the authors of the various books on the subject you were researching.

LEVEL 1	DIFFICULTY : NOVICE	LEVEL 2	DIFFICULTY : MEDIUM
ELEMENTARY READING		INSPECTIONAL READING	
LEVEL 4	DIFFICULTY : EXPERT	LEVEL 3	DIFFICULTY : HARD
SYNOPTICAL READING		ANALYTICAL READING	

Book Recommendations

You might be in the constant search of the highest quality books for various topics you'd like to learn about. I don't have a recommendation list yet, but what I'll do is provide you with a list of websites (from people I admire) with book recommendations, this will give you a reference point whenever you initially want to look for a book:

1. James Clear (Numerous different categories of fiction and non-fiction books): <https://jamesclear.com/best-books>
2. Jordan Peterson (Books in the realms of; Psychology, History, Neuroscience, Religion etc.): <https://www.jordanbpeterson.com/great-books/>
3. Warren Buffett (This is not Buffett's website, but rather someone who compiled a list from the various recommendations Buffet has made over time): <https://www.kevinrooke.com/book-recommendations/warren-buffett>
4. Neil DeGrasse Tyson (This is not Neil's website, but rather someone who compiled a list from the various recommendations Neil has made over time): <https://www.goodbooks.io/people/neil-degrasse-tyson>
5. Josh Kauffman (Business focused): <https://personalmba.com/best-business-books/>

Recap of "On Reading" article series

This article series aimed to present valuable information that I found while on my quest to understand the importance of reading a bit better.

I briefly touched on the [history of reading](#) to help us better appreciate how far we've come as a species. There was a point in time when we had no written information. Let's not take this for granted.

I then moved on to explore the [benefits of reading](#). This is to point out what we might be missing by not dedicating some time to reading. The benefits I included are those that strongly resonated with me, but there are more benefits to reading, and I encourage you to do some research on your own if you need more reasons to become a diligent reader.

Reading is good but forgetting mars the whole experience. I quickly touch on how or rather why we forget according to research from Ebbinghaus and later on provide ways to remember better what we read. If you take away anything from that section, in my opinion, it's this:

- Have a purpose when you read. This should be a proactive step, and it guides your engagement throughout your reading. You should be able to easily answer the question "Why are you reading that book/article etc."

I felt the article would have been incomplete if I did not present Adler's levels of reading. I was not taught such growing up but having a rough idea of the various levels of engagement needed to read a book is useful information because it can guide you on how you read. I recommend you go read the actual book "How to read a book" by Mortimer Adler, it is quite informative.

I follow up by presenting the [Feynman technique](#), which is more of an additional technique on how to read and understand. A demanding, but brilliant technique to understand concepts.

After all this, I thought it'll be helpful to provide some book recommendations from people I admire.

I'll end this with some quotes on reading. I hope you could find something valuable from this article.

Quotes on reading

I enjoy reading quotes on topics I am actively reading, because they let me know what others think about the topic/subject in a concise way (typically one sentence). Below you can find 15 quotes that depict the importance of reading.

1. "Classic' – a book which people praise and don't read." - **Mark Twain**
2. "My alma mater was books, a good library.... I could spend the rest of my life reading, just satisfying my curiosity." - **Malcolm X**
3. "The man who does not read good books is no better than the man who can't." - **Mark Twain**
4. "Somebody who only reads newspapers and at best books of contemporary authors looks to me like an extremely near-sighted person who scorns eyeglasses. He is completely dependent on the prejudices and fashions of his times since he never gets to see or hear anything else." - **Albert Einstein**
5. "Reading is essential for those who seek to rise above the ordinary." - **Jim Rohn**

6. "The reading of all good books is like conversation with the finest (people) of the past centuries." - **Descartes**
7. "In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through to you."
- **Mortimer J. Adler**
8. "Always read something that will make you look good if you die in the middle of it." - **P.J. O'Rourke**
9. "Once you learn to read, you will be forever free." - **Frederick Douglas**
10. "I intend to put up with nothing that I can put down." - **Edgar Allan Poe**
11. "When I look back, I am so impressed again with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young." - **Maya Angelou**
12. "Employ your time in improving yourself by other men's writings so that you shall come easily by what others have labored hard for." - **Socrates**
13. "I have never known any distress that an hour's reading did not relieve."
- **Montesquieu**
14. "Reading is the gateway skill that makes all other learning possible,"
Barack Obama

Sources (For Parts 1 to 3)

- [History of reading - Web Article](#)
- [Maryanne Wolf - Proust and the squid: The story and science of the reading brain - Book](#)
- [Reading acquisition enhances an early visual process of contour integration - Published Paper](#)
- [Visual processing - Web Article](#)
- [Soft skills employers love - Web Article](#)
- [Demand for "Uniquely Human Skills" increases even as technology and automation replace some jobs - Web Article](#)
- [Jordan Peterson on the Power of writing - YouTube Video](#)
- [Jordan Peterson on the Importance of reading and writing - YouTube Video](#)
- [Life-span cognitive activity, neuropathologic burden, and cognitive aging - Science Article](#)
- [Hermann Ebbinghaus - Memory: A contribution to experimental psychology - Research](#)
- [Understanding elaborative rehearsal in psychology - Web Article](#)
- [What is elaborative rehearsal? An Osmosis guide - Web Article](#)
- [How to remember what you read - Web Article](#)
- [Mortimer J. Adler - How to read a book - Book](#)
- [Learning from the Feynman Technique - Web Article](#)