

The Simple System I Use to Read More



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Warren Buffett, the man commonly referred to as the greatest investor of the 20th century, was standing in front of 165 wideeyed students from Columbia University.

One of the students raised his hand and asked Buffett for his thoughts on the best way to prepare for an investing career. After thinking for a moment, Buffett pulled out a stack of papers and trade reports he had brought with him and said, “Read 500 pages like this every day. That’s how knowledge works. It builds up, like compound interest. All of you can do it, but I guarantee not many of you will do it.”

Buffett estimates that 80 percent of his working hours are spent reading or thinking. It’s enough to make you ask, “Am I reading enough books?”

When I asked myself that question recently, I realized that there were some simple reasons I wasn’t reading as much as I would like to, and I developed a reasonable system that is helping me read more than 30 books per year.

Let me explain...

How to Read More Books

If you know how to read, then reading books is relatively easy. You simply have to make time to read. Easier said than done, of course.

When I looked at my own reading habits, I realized that they were mostly reactive, not proactive. If an interesting link flashed across my screen on Facebook or Twitter, then I would read it as a reaction. I wasn’t proactively making time to read books each day. I was simply reading interesting ideas that were pushed in front of me.

As a result, most of my reading was done online. Now, there are plenty of excellent articles on the web, but generally speaking, the quality of good books is better. Books typically have better writing (more tightly edited) and higher quality information (better factchecking and more extensive research). From a learning perspective, it’s probably a better use of my time to read books than to read online content.

So, I had to figure out a strategy that would allow me to read more books without letting typical

distractions get in the way.

How do you do that?

20 Pages Per Day

Here's the only pattern I've been able to stick with consistently:

Read 20 pages to start the day.

I usually wake up, drink a glass of water, write down 3 things I'm grateful for, and read 20 pages of a book. For the last 10 weeks, I have followed this new habit. As of today, I'm 100 pages into my 7th book. At that pace (7 books per 10 weeks) I'll read about 36 books in the next year. Not bad.

Here's why I think this pattern works: 20 pages is small enough that it's not intimidating. Most people can finish reading 20 pages within 30 minutes. And if you do it first thing in the morning, then the urgencies of the day don't get in the way.

Finally, 20 pages seems small but adds up fast. It's a great average speed.

If time allows, I'll read at other times as well. After the research I did for my article on how to get better sleep, I have added reading to my "prepare for bed" routine as well. But regardless of what happens during the rest of the day, I still get my 20 pages in each morning. The First Hour

How do you spend the first hour of your day?

Most people spend it getting dressed, getting ready, and rushing out the door. What if that time was spent making yourself a better person? What if you woke up an hour before you needed to each day and worked on yourself? How much better would you be at work, in your relationships, and as a person?

That's essentially what this reading strategy is asking you to do. Before you move on to the normal bustle of the day, invest in yourself. Before your life turns into a whirlwind of activity, read a book that will make you better. As with most habits that can greatly impact your life, this will never feel urgent, but it is important.

Use the checklist on the next page to set up a reading habit today.

Read More Checklist

- ❑ **Select a time to read every day.** I suggest you do it first thing in the morning, but the important thing is to read at the same time everyday.
- ❑ **Choose a page goal.** Again you can use my 20 page goal or formulate your own. Just make sure that the goal is easy enough that you can't say no, but significant enough for you to feel like you're making progress.
- ❑ **Get a book.** Find a book to read today. If you wait til tomorrow, your reading time will arrive and you'll be empty handed. If you need suggestions, take a look at my [Recommended Reading List](#).
- ❑ **Find a place to read.** Reading in the same place every day will help solidify this habit. Find a comfortable place in your home or office where you are away from distraction.
- ❑ **Set a reminder.** Use your calendar app or even a simple postit on your bathroom mirror. Create a trigger that will remind you to read.
- ❑ **Tell somebody about your commitment.** Habit change does not happen in isolation. You need to share your commitment with others in order to make it feel real in your own mind. Email, call or text three people you care about that you plan to read x number of pages everyday at x time.