



READ MORE BOOKS NOW

Lesson #2

Always Have a Good Book

Welcome back to the course! In this lesson, we'll focus on another secret to reading more books: always having a book available. You can build the largest and most interesting library in the world, but those books are practically useless if they're not around when you have the itch or opportunity to read.

When I started carrying a book with me everywhere I went, my reading doubled almost overnight. Why? Because our days are packed with opportunities to read. You may not recognize them at first, but for example, we spend hours each day eating, commuting, waiting in lines, exercising, working around the house. Most of us usually fill that time by whipping out our cell phones, but all those are perfect opportunities for reading.

Let's focus on that a little more specifically. Here are some of my favorite times to squeeze in more reading. Picture yourself in each situation:

First, read during meals. Pat Williams, founder of the Orlando Magic, my favorite basketball team, is notorious for eating alone. He loves it. Most people hate going into restaurants by themselves, but Pat Williams knows that his lunch break is the perfect time to dive into a book. In fact, he once advised, "If given a choice between lunch with, say, Colin Powell or reading [Colin Powell's] autobiography, take the book. Powell has poured hundreds of hours into that book—more than you'll get in



one lunch conversation. Take the book, and then make time to read it.” Though I’m not sure I’d take his advice *that* far, he’s got the right principle. Unless I’m eating with family or friends, I *prefer* to eat alone so I can read. If you devote only a few meals each week to reading, you’ll knock out several more books per year, guaranteed. Simple as that.

Second, read when your car is parked. Think about it: how much time do you spend each week at traffic lights, train crossings, school pick-up lines, or parking lots? What if, instead of becoming frustrated and impatient, you seized that time by reading? Leave a book on your passenger seat and pop it open during breaks. Sure, you might only get through a few pages each session, but it will add up fast. Just ten pages a day equals one book every couple months—that’s six books a year, just while your car is parked. One bonus tip: if you leave a print book on the seat, be sure it’s bookmarked so you can open it to the right place and start reading fast. Or leave a Kindle or other e-reader on the seat, which is even *quicker* to get in and out of. Just pick it up, turn it on, and start reading.

Third, read in waiting rooms. We all visit the doctor’s office, dentist, clinic, or DMV, and most of us spend a long time in the waiting room. Next time you’re there, don’t be that person who reluctantly grabs a wrinkled, out-of-date magazine from the table because there’s nothing better around. Bring your own book. After all, would you rather waste your time on a three-year-old tabloid or a good book that might change your life?

Fourth, read on the airplane, bus, or train. I don’t know how often you travel, but these are golden opportunities. For me, airplanes are the best. I fly about once every month or two, and while I don’t like being away from my family, I relish flying. Why? Because flights are *perfect* reading opportunities. Where else will you find uninterrupted time where you’re disconnected and undistracted? On a plane, you can’t talk to people on your cell phone, and you typically don’t have a lot of space to work on your computer. But you can read peacefully, without interruption, for an extended period of time. Don’t be stuck flipping through the Sky Mall catalog like everyone else on the plane. Bring your book! The same holds for trains, buses, taxis, or any passive transportation. And by the way, this should be obvious, but *don’t sign up for wi-fi* while traveling! Resist the urge! Signing up for wi-fi virtually guarantees you’ll be tempted away from reading. So stay offline. Read a book.

Once you begin using opportunities like these throughout your day, you'll discover you actually *want* to read in these periods. You'll soon find that reading becomes second nature whenever you have a spare moment.

This is a good point to mention two reading alternatives: eBooks and audiobooks. I'm typically a print purist—I love a paper book over digital—but I've come to value both my Kindle e-reader and my Audible audiobooks.

One main reason is because they make it easy to read on the go. With smart phones, tablets, and e-readers, we can now carry hundreds of books with us wherever we are. Amazon sparked the eBook revolution in the early 2000s, and they of course sell a wide range of e-reading devices, from single function Kindles, that only allow you to read books (not necessarily a flaw), to the full-blown Kindle Fire, on which you can access movies, websites, and apps. Those devices are paired with the Amazon Kindle store which boasts hundreds of thousands of eBooks. You'll find classics like *Pride and Prejudice* or *The Brothers Karamazov*, which are typically free or less than a dollar, to the top bestselling titles today. More often than not, you can purchase the eBook version of a title you like for cheaper than the print version, and the eBook comes with bonus features like easy syncing and social media sharing.

But you don't have to own a Kindle device to read Kindle eBooks. On any smartphone or tablet you can download the free Kindle app which automatically syncs with your computer and other devices. If you install the free app, you'll be able to start a book during breakfast on your iPad, continue on your phone during your commute, and then read a chapter during lunch on your desktop monitor. The free Kindle software automatically syncs all your books, notes, highlights, and bookmarks through the Internet which means you'll have access to your entire library, wherever you are. You pick up right where you left off on any device and keep track of all your notes.

Because of all this, I highly recommend building a digital library in addition to a print one. That doesn't mean you have to go all digital. For instance, there are some genres and titles I typically don't read digitally, like heavier non-fiction or books in which I plan to take lots of notes. But for lighter books, especially fiction, eBooks are the way to go. They're cheaper, easier to use, and more portable.

Besides eBooks, another way to ensure you always have something to read is to use audiobooks. Now, for many years I was an audiobook skeptic. I typically write in my books (we'll discover why that's important in a little bit) and I always considered

“listening” to a book to be a second-tier experience; it wasn’t *true* reading, I thought. But then I signed up Audible, the world’s largest audiobook platform. I browsed their books, picked one I had been wanting to read, and downloaded it to my phone. I also synced my phone to my car, so I could stream the audiobook while driving.

And from that moment on, I was hooked. Listening to audiobooks meant that my daily commutes were now filled with good books. The average American commutes 25 minutes back-and-forth to work. That’s 50 minutes a day. A decent size audiobook typically runs 7-8 hours, which means you can knock out one book every couple weeks, just while driving back and forth to work!

I also listen to audiobooks while I work out, or mow the lawn. All of those activities—driving, exercising, mowing the lawn—used to bore me, but now I look forward to them. I’m fine if traffic slows down, because that means more time listening to interesting books!

It’s worth noting that many books, especially the classics, were *meant* to be read out loud. In other words, they were created to be audiobooks. Think of ancient epics like *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, or *Beowulf*, or the great books of the Old Testament. Cultures transmitted these works orally. Their rhythms were meant to be spoken and heard, rather than read. With the right narrator you can capture that dynamic through audiobooks and hear these books the way their authors intended.

With audiobooks, you can also adjust the speed, which is huge. With just a couple clicks in Audible you can increase the narration rate anywhere from 1.25x to 3x. Although I don’t recommend this for all books, many books contain fluff and drag along, and you can safely ramp up the pace. Think about it: just bumping up the speed to “1.25x” will *instantly* boost your reading 25%. That tweak alone will net you a dozen more books this year!

So, to recap, you should always have at least one book available wherever you go, whether it’s print, digital, or audiobook. You want instant access, so you can get in and out quickly. I recommend using a combination of formats. Keep a print book in your car or purse, get an e-reader and download some books from the Kindle store, and start a free trial at Audible to get an audiobook on your phone. By using all three, you’ll ensure you’re never stuck reading old magazines, or wasting time scrolling through social media, or dreading your boring commute. You’ll read more books and you’ll look forward to driving, exercising, and even waiting in the car.

In the next lesson, we'll focus on reading challenges, and how they keep you moving from a book even if it seems like a drag. So get excited, and I'll see you there!