

In a reading rut? How to get back into reading for fun

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. What kinds of books do you like to read?
2. What is the book that has had the greatest impact on you?
3. Do you think it is difficult to maintain a reading habit? Why or why not?

2 Key words

a. Match the correct word or phrase to each definition. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

bingeing

memoir

get hung up on

enemies-to-lovers

center

gossipy

increasingly

fiction

slow down

empathetic

genre

grounded

rut

1. an invented story; not based on true events _____
2. inclined to discuss the private affairs of others in a way that is casual, and/or sensational

3. consuming large quantities of media or food in a short period of time _____
4. a state where you feel trapped in repetitive habits or an unchanging routine

5. occurring with greater frequency or intensity over time _____
6. being overly worried about, fixated on or emotionally stuck on an issue _____
7. a type of writing, film or art that has similar styles or themes _____
8. to reduce speed, intensity or activity, often to regain control or reduce stress

9. emotionally stable, pragmatic and connected to reality in a clear and balanced way

In a reading rut? How to get back into reading for fun

Level 2: Intermediate

10. able to perceive and understand another person's emotions or perspective

11. a narrative work in which an author recounts significant personal experiences

12. a type of story where two people who start out disliking each other eventually fall in love

13. to prioritise something so that it becomes the main focus of attention

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

1. She spent the weekend _____ the entire season of the show.

2. When you write your introduction, make sure you _____ the main argument clearly.

3. His response was so _____ that everyone felt understood.

4. The movie uses a(n) _____ storyline to show how the characters' feelings evolve.

5. I read widely, but my favourite _____ will always be mystery.

6. The article felt too _____ to take seriously—it focused more on rumours than facts.

7. Even under pressure, she stays calm and _____, which helps her make better decisions.

8. He feels stuck in a(n) _____ and wants to try something new.

9. Her schedule has become _____ demanding over the past few months.

10. You should not _____ the mistake you made last week. Everyone else has already moved on.

In a reading rut? How to get back into reading for fun

Level 2: Intermediate

11. The coach asked us to _____ and think about our priorities.
12. She plans to write a(n) _____ about her years living abroad.
13. I don't read books with facts and figures, but I still learn a lot from reading
_____.

In a reading rut? How to get back into reading for fun

Level 2: Intermediate

In a world full of distractions, it can be difficult to form a habit that needs attention. Experts advise on getting out of the rut

Madeleine Aggeler

17 November, 2025

- 1 Most of us read all day – texts, emails, menus, bills, social media captions and news stories. But in the UK, a 2024 report found that half of UK adults do not regularly read for pleasure.
- 2 “The world is increasingly distracting,” says Sam Helmick, president of the American Library Association. “It can be really difficult to get into a reading habit.”
- 3 Are you in a reading rut? We asked experts how to get out of it.
- 4 **What are the benefits of reading?**
It is said that reading is good for you. It might even make you a better person.
- 5 It has been found that reading fiction can make people more empathetic and thoughtful.
- 6 Craig Getting, co-host of the book podcast Overdue, says reading fiction helps him understand other people’s views. “It helps me to have a more grounded and open-minded view of the people I interact with,” Getting says.
- 7 It doesn’t even matter if fiction isn’t your favorite thing to read. Regular reading has been shown to reduce stress levels and protect cognitive function in later life.
- 8 Morgan Menzies, a literary curator and influencer says reading is an effective way for her to slow down before bed. “Some nights I get a few pages in. Other times it’s one or two pages and I’m out,” she laughs.
- 9 **Why do people stop reading?**
If reading for fun is so great, why do so many people fall out of the habit?
- 10 **Distraction:** Distraction is a big reason, says Getting’s podcast co-host, Andrew Cunningham says that a lot of entertainment is made to get our attention, including TV, social media, news, podcasts. Plus, many of these other options are “a lot easier to do while you’re doing something else”, he says. In contrast, reading requires much more attention.

- 11 **Life changes:** Menzies says people also tend to break their reading routine during times of change, like graduating, having children, or moving. “You’re focused on other things, so you can’t center reading as much.”
- 12 **Reading selection:** Sometimes, people get hung up on reading a certain kind of book. My own reading ruts happen when I try to read books I think will make me seem smarter, rather than what I enjoy (detective stories and gossipy memoirs).
- 13 “If you’re excited to read classic fiction, then awesome,” says Cunningham. “But if you prefer to read an enemies-to-lovers romance or a book with dragons, then read that.”
- 14 **How can you get back into a reading routine?**
Figure out what you enjoy: Helmick recommends trying various kinds of books. “Read the first chapter, and see which one or two interests you.”
- 15 **Keep it short:** Cunningham suggests people start with shorter books. “Don’t have Infinite Jest be the first book you read if you haven’t read anything in a few years,” he says. He suggests searching online for recommendations for short books or short story collections.
- 16 **The medium doesn’t matter:** Whether you read physical books, use an e-reader or listen to audiobooks, it’s all valuable.
- 17 **Do it daily:** Once you’ve found your favorite genres and reading medium, make time for it each day. “Read 10 minutes before bed for about 20 days,” says Helmick. “That’s how you create a habit.”
- 18 **Make it fun:** Finally, make sure you’re having a good time. “Reading is something that should bring you joy,” says Menzies. “There’s a lot you can gain from it.”

© Guardian News and Media 2025
First published in *The Guardian*, 17/11/2025

In a reading rut? How to get back into reading for fun

Level 2: Intermediate

3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. How many people in the UK read for pleasure?
2. What kind of reading is best for improving empathy?
3. How is reading better for you later in life?
4. How is reading good for everyone?
5. What can people do with some kinds of entertainment that they can't do with reading?
6. What kinds of books does the author pressure herself to read?
7. What kind of books does she prefer to read?
8. How important is the medium you use to read?
9. How often does Helmick recommend you read to start the habit?
10. What's the most important thing that reading should bring you?

4 Key language

a. Look at the sentences below. Find sentences in the article that have the same meaning.

1. People say that reading is good for you.

2. Researchers have found that reading fiction can make people more empathetic and thoughtful.

3. Research has shown that reading reduces stress.

4. People make entertainment to get our attention.

In a reading rut? How to get back into reading for fun

Level 2: Intermediate

b. Why were the actors of the verbs removed in the sentences from the article?

c. Convert the active sentences below into the passive voice.

1. The newspaper published the article yesterday.

2. People made a lot of mistakes at the budget meeting.

3. Many experts have argued that reading helps with cognitive functioning as we get older.

4. The author wrote the book to appeal to mystery fans.

5. Someone had knocked the milk off the counter.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- Reading is the most valuable source of entertainment.
- You can't get the same depth of character from a movie as you can from a book.
- Listening to audiobooks is not the same as reading words on the page.
- You can convey more emotion through music than through writing.

In a reading rut? How to get back into reading for fun

Level 2: Intermediate

6 In your own words

- a. Imagine you have a friend who has very strong and fixed opinions about reading. They believe that only reading long, old, classic literature is valuable. Prepare a presentation to convince them to change how they think of literature. You can include:
 - arguments for why all reading is good for you (either from the article or your own research)
 - what reading outside your comfort zone can teach you
 - what you love most about your favourite genre
 - the disadvantages of only reading canonized literature
 - what you loved most about the last thing you read
 - how reading more broadly could allow them to appreciate classic literature differently
- b. Present to the class and encourage questions.