

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

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. What kinds of books do you like to read?
2. What is your favourite book? Why?
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.

distraction

empathetic

fiction

habit

rut

1. writing or stories about things that are not real _____
2. something you do regularly, often without thinking _____
3. able to understand how other people feel _____
4. something that takes your attention away from what you are doing _____
5. a negative word for a situation or pattern you repeat again and again, without changing it _____

gossipy

memoir

open-minded

routine

thoughtful

6. a book where someone writes about their own life _____
7. ready to accept different ideas or opinions _____
8. showing care or interest in other people by what you say or do _____
9. talking a lot about other people and sharing their personal information _____
10. the things you usually do in the same order every day or week _____

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

1. He enjoys _____ because he likes books with imaginary characters and places.
2. He tried to study, but the loud music was a big _____.
3. After months of doing the same things, he realised he was stuck in a(n)
_____.
4. He can be a bit _____, especially when he starts talking about his neighbours.
5. She bought a(n) _____ written by a famous actor who talks about his childhood.
6. He is very _____, so people feel comfortable telling him their problems.
7. I'm trying to change my _____ of checking my phone all the time, something I do without thinking.
8. She's really _____ and always brings extra snacks for everyone.
9. I need to change my morning _____ because it doesn't give me enough time to eat breakfast.
10. My sister is very _____ and enjoys hearing different opinions.

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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

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- 1 In the UK, a 2024 report found that half of UK adults do not often read for pleasure. "The world is distracting," says Sam Helmick, president of the American Library Association. "It can be really difficult to start a reading habit." Are you in a reading rut? We asked experts how to get out of it.

2 What are the benefits of reading?

It is said that reading is good for you. It might even make you a better person. Research says that reading fiction can make people more empathetic and thoughtful. Craig Getting, who runs the book podcast Overdue, says reading fiction helps him understand other people's views. "It helps me be more open-minded with the people I meet," he says.

- 3 It doesn't even matter if fiction isn't your favorite thing to read. Research shows that regular reading reduces stress levels and protects your brain as you get older.

4 Why do people stop reading?

If reading for fun is so great, why do so many people stop doing it?

- 5 **Distraction:** Distraction is a big reason, says Getting's podcast colleague, Andrew Cunningham: "A lot of entertainment is made to get your attention". He says it is also a lot easier to do while you're doing something else. Reading requires much more attention.

- 6 **Life changes:** Menzies says people also break their reading routine during times of change, like graduating or moving. "You're focused on other things, so reading doesn't feel as important."
- 7 **Reading selection:** 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).
- 8 "If you're excited to read classic fiction, then awesome," says Cunningham. "But you should read what you enjoy: a romance or a book with dragons, for example."
- 9 **How can you get back into a reading routine?**
- 10 **Keep it short:** Cunningham says "you should start with shorter books." He suggests searching online for short books or short story collections.
- 11 **The medium doesn't matter:** You could read physical books, use an e-reader, or listen to audiobooks. It's all valuable.
- 12 **Do it daily:** Make time to read every day to build a habit. "You could try reading 10 minutes before bed for about 20 days," says Helmick.
- 13 **Make it fun:** Reading is something that should make you happy, says Menzies. "There's a lot you can get from it."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. How many adults 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 do?

4 Key language

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

1. It's a good idea to figure out what you enjoy.

2. I think you should keep it short.

3. I suggest that you start with shorter books.

4. Why not start with 10 minutes before bed for about 20 days?

b. Highlight other ways of giving advice from the article.

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c. Put the verbs and any modals used to give advice into the table below.

Imperative (verb in bare infinitive)	Modal advice (modal verb + bare infinitive)

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- Reading is the most valuable source of entertainment.
- Listening to audiobooks is not the same as reading words on the page.

6 In your own words

a. Plan a presentation to present your favourite book to the class. Include:

- a short summary of the book
- your favourite things about it
- what you learned from it
- what you enjoyed about it
- why you think your classmates should read it.

b. Present your book to the class.