

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

Level 3: Advanced

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.

center	competing for eyeballs	slow down	lure
grab	empathetic	grounded	memoir
bingeing	genre	enemies-to-lovers	rut
canonized	fiction	get hung up on	social-cognitive
dip your toe	gossipy	increasingly	your cup of tea

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. to experiment with something cautiously or on a very small scale _____
4. consuming large quantities of media or food in a short period of time

5. a state where you feel trapped in repetitive habits or an unchanging routine

6. occurring with greater frequency or intensity over time _____
7. being overly worried about, fixated on or emotionally stuck on an issue _____
8. when something immediately captures your attention or interest in an irresistible way

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9. to entice or attract someone by appealing to their desires, curiosity or expectations

10. accepted as part of the important, influential works in literature _____
11. a type of writing, film or art that has similar styles or themes _____
12. to reduce speed, intensity or activity, often to regain control or reduce stress

13. something that aligns with your personal tastes, interests or preferences

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

15. the mental processes of understanding and responding to social interactions

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

17. a narrative type of text in which an author recounts significant personal experiences

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

19. attempting to attract public attention, versus others who also want that attention

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

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.

1. The opening chapter didn't interest me, but the twist in the second chapter really _____ my attention.
2. She spent the weekend _____ the entire season of the show.
3. The novel was recently _____ and added to several literature courses.
4. When you write your introduction, make sure you _____ the main argument clearly.
5. With so much content online, every platform is _____.
6. I decided to _____ into the project before committing fully.
7. His response was so _____ that everyone felt understood.
8. The movie uses a(n) _____ storyline to show how the characters' feelings evolve.
9. I read widely, but my favourite _____ will always be mystery.
10. The article felt too _____ to take seriously—it focused more on rumours than facts.
11. Even under pressure, she stays calm and _____, which helps her make better decisions.
12. I don't read books with facts and figures, but I still learn a lot from reading _____.
13. He feels stuck in a(n) _____ and wants to try something new.
14. Her schedule has become _____ demanding over the past few months.
15. He _____ the mistake he made last week, even though everyone else has already moved on.
16. The coach asked us to _____ and think about our priorities.

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17. The museum tour was fine, but the modern art section just wasn't our _____.
18. Their research focuses on _____ processes in group decision-making.
19. She plans to write a(n) _____ about her years living abroad.
20. The film tries to _____ viewers in with the emotional journey of its characters.

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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

Madeleine Aggeler
17 November, 2025

- 1 Most of us read all day – texts, emails, menus, utility bills, social media captions and news stories. But fewer people are reading for fun. In 2024 in the UK, it was 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?**
Experts say that there are numerous benefits to a regular reading practice. It might even make you a better person.
- 5 Studies have found that reading fiction specifically can make people more empathetic, strengthen their social-cognitive abilities, and increase psychological richness.
- 6 Craig Getting, co-host of the book podcast *Overdue*, says reading fiction helps him experiment with the perspectives of other people. “It helps me have a more open-minded view and be a little bit more grounded in how I think about the people I interact with,” Getting says.
- 7 Even if fiction isn’t your cup of tea, regular reading has been shown to reduce stress levels and protect cognitive function in later life.
- 8 “I always say that [reading] is really good for helping you rest and slow down,” says Morgan Menzies, a literary curator and influencer. Menzies says it’s an effective way for her to unwind 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: “There’s a lot of entertainment out there competing for your eyeballs – 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.

- 11 Helmick agrees about the lure of multitasking. “I know folks who read short articles while waiting in line at the grocery store or bingeing a TV show, so you’re not fully engaged.”
- 12 By contrast, reading books requires a degree of “intentional focus”, Helmick says. A novel demands a greater commitment of time and energy than, say, a TikTok about someone’s morning routine.
- 13 **Changing circumstances:** Menzies says people also tend to break their reading routine during times of change, like graduating college, starting a family, or moving. “There are other things taking time from you, so you can’t center reading as much as you once did,” she says.
- 14 **Reading selection:** Sometimes, people put pressure on themselves to read a certain kind of book. My own reading ruts have come when I try to force myself to read books I think will make me seem serious and intellectual, rather than what I enjoy (detective stories and gossip memoirs).
- 15 “If you’re excited to read great canonized fiction, then awesome,” says Cunningham. “But if you’re excited to read an enemies-to-lovers romance or a book where people ride dragons, then read that.”
- 16 **How can you get back into a reading routine?**
Figure out what you enjoy: Helmick recommends going to a library and checking out various kinds of books. “Read the first chapter, and see which one or two grab you,” they say.
- 17 **Don’t force it:** If you’re not enjoying a volume, put it down and move on to the next. “If you don’t like a book, no one’s judging you,” says Menzies. “You’re not failing.”
- 18 **Keep it short and sweet:** Cunningham suggests people start with shorter books. “Don’t have *Infinite Jest* be the first book you pick up if you haven’t read anything in a few years,” he says.
- 19 Short story collections can also be a good way to dip your toe back into reading, says Getting. “You get a full narrative experience out of 10 or 15 pages,” he says.
- 20 **Make it social:** Experts recommend sharing books with friends or joining a book club. Menzies attends an audiobook walking club where everyone walks together, listening to their own audiobooks.

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"Throughout our walk, we stop and chat about our books and what's exciting us," she says.

- 21 **The medium doesn't matter:** Don't get hung up on the format. Whether you read physical books, use an e-reader or listen to audiobooks, it's all valuable, experts say. "If that's what gets you reading, that's great," says Getting.
- 22 **Do it daily:** Once you've found your favorite genres and reading method, carve out a little bit of time for it each day. "Read 10 minutes before bed for about 20 days," says Helmick. "By the end, you'll have created a habit."

- 23 **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."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What proportion of adults in the UK read for pleasure?
2. What kind of reading is best for improving empathy and social-cognitive abilities?
3. How is reading better for you later in life?
4. How is reading good for everyone?
5. What can people do with some other 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 much 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. Tick (✓) the sentences that are in the passive voice.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Regular reading has been shown to reduce stress levels and protect cognitive function in later life. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Studies have found that reading fiction specifically can make people more empathetic. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. It was found that half of UK adults do not regularly read for pleasure. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Experts say that there are numerous benefits to a regular reading practice. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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b. 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.

6 In your own words

a. Imagine you have a friend who is very opinionated about reading. They believe that only reading long, old, classic literature is valuable. Prepare a presentation to convince them to broaden 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

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- 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.