

Title: The rewards of reading

Subtitle: Why you should be reading if you aren't already

By Jenna Heinz

Many consider reading to be one of their favorite pastimes, as it brings joy, calmness, and pleasure. Still, reading is not everyone's favorite. Luckily, there are many reasons why one should read. Other than the typical reasons why book enthusiasts love to read, there are many benefits to this activity. Albert Einstein once said, "If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales." Along with making you smarter, reading can help you in areas of your life having to deal with your skills, emotions, health, and mental state.

One of the most desirable effects of reading is it improves your knowledge. Just like you lift weights or run to get stronger and in better shape, "Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body"(Addison). Activity in your brain that occurs when reading helps to strengthen it. Just like when you make working out your body a habit, continuously exercising your brain will help it to work better, leading you to be brighter. It will help your brain continue to work better as you age. When you are younger, your brain is taking huge steps in development, so it is an even more important time to exercise your brain.

Going along with gaining intellect, some genres like nonfiction, informational, and historical fiction can help educate you on topics you don't know much about. Also, many fiction books outline the life of someone with a disease, illness, disorders, etc. These stories give you an inside look at the condition where you can possibly learn more about it.

Often while reading you see new words; this can lead to the bettering of your vocabulary. While reading, you may not know the definition of a word, but you can use context clues to get a general idea of what it means. Reading is also a way of unknowingly studying writing. All authors have their own unique writing style while still following English rules. Reading can therefore benefit your own writing as you are studying a professional writer's work while you read.

As you read you are taking in details that contribute to the storyline. In order for you to continually understand what is happening you have to be able to remember what you read. Frequently reading helps exercise your ability to memorize information. A better memory earned from reading can later help with studying for quizzes and tests.

There are many ways you can prolong your life and one of those is reading. As previously mentioned, reading is like an exercise for your brain. Just like the rest of your body, the longer it is worked, the better it works and for longer. Keeping your brain active, as reading does, helps to keep your overall health in good condition. One study shows that those who read for thirty minutes a day would have an additional two years added to their life than those who did not.

Another way reading can benefit your physical health is it can lower your blood pressure and heart rate. This pastime brings calmness, as your focus is only on what you are reading. All of your stress and worries are out of the picture while reading, which in turn, calms you. When you are relaxed, your blood pressure and heart rate are going to be lower than when you are not.

However, this pastime has many benefits for not just your physical health, but also your mental health. Sometimes in life, people feel like they are getting to a breaking point. They may be really stressed out, anxious, or sad. Books give readers a place to run away to. Instead of

dealing with your own problems or life, you can take a break from it and get a look into someone else's. It helps to decrease stress or take away negative feelings for a while, making it a great activity for those with depression.

It is common in books where the main character, or even a side character, is dealing with a difficult challenge in their life. A few examples of this would be divorced parents, losing a loved one, or bullying. These are all things we know of but never really understand what it is like unless it has happened to you. Learning about these hardships through someone's experience in a book can help you to better understand what someone is dealing with and be more empathetic.

Picking up a book regularly can have a wide range of benefits come from it. Whether you are simply reading for pleasure or for schoolwork, the positive impacts it can have on your life are endless. Your physical health, mental health, and skill set will all see improvements if reading becomes a habit for you or already has.

## Sources

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