

Why Reading Makes You More Creative

By [Lesley Yarbrough](#) in [Inspiration](#)

Many, many studies have been conducted on the health and psychological benefits of reading books. If you spend the time going through the long lists of results, you might just walk away thinking that reading is some sort of super activity, a wonder drug that makes us smarter and healthier. Honestly, you wouldn't be that far off.

Despite the research, documents, and experts that recommend reading books as part of your daily routine, there are staggering statistics out there about how little people read.

- 25% of adults will not read a single book this year
- 33% of high school graduates never read another book for their entire life
- 42% of college graduates never read another book after college
- 80% of US families did not buy or read a book last year

When it comes to those of us in creative fields (designers, writers, marketers, etc.) the problem isn't so much that we don't read, it's that we spend our time reading blogs, tweets, magazines, and other short form snippets. This is great for consuming lots of information and staying up to date, but it does not work our brains the same way as a

book, which is an activity that forces the reader to ditch the distractions and focus. It's this focus that acts as a catalyst for the many perks that come from reading books, not the least of which is an increase in creativity. Below we take a look at a few of the reasons reading books makes you more creative.

Reading Exercises Your Brain

"No matter how busy you may think you are, you must find time for reading, or surrender yourself to self-chosen ignorance." ~ Confucius

One of the oldest cliches I can remember about reading is that it's "exercise for the mind", but just because it's a cliché doesn't make it false. Mental fitness is equally as important as physical fitness, and like our bodies, our brains need exercise daily to stay fit. However, we tend not to prioritize our mind workouts like we do our trips to the gym. Instead, we immerse ourselves in television or the internet, wondering why we have such a hard time coming up with ideas.

Reading just 30 minutes a day (again we're talking books, not blogs) flexes those mind muscles. It makes you think, fantasize, use your imagination. You have to comprehend ideas and reasoning, and like any exercise, the more you train the better you will get.

Reading Leads to Better Concentration

"I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book." ~ Groucho Marx

We live in the information age. A fast-paced world where we're surrounded by gadgets feeding us words, data, links, status updates, ads, and all sorts of other information that we can't possibly process and digest. It can be an overwhelming situation, but there is a simple solution. Turn off the TV. Turn off the computer. Pick up a book. Concentrate.

Television is passive and noisy. Books require active engagement and concentration -- they completely absorb your mind. It takes effort to read words, figure out what they mean, and why they were written that way. While you read you're building images, thoughts, and opinions in your head. You're using critical thinking and logic to process this information, to understand the concepts and ideas being passed to you by the author. And again, the more you train your brain to concentrate, the easier it becomes. Reading leads to better concentration and better concentration leads to clear thinking.

Reading Reduces Stress and Helps You Sleep

"Some books leave us free and some books make us free." ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Research has shown that reading is by far the best way to relax. It even beats things like listening to music or going for a walk. Allowing the mind to concentrate and escape into a literary world eases the tensions in the rest of the body. In fact, a recent study showed that it only takes 6 minutes of reading to slow your heart rate and ease tension in your muscles. That same study states that this is "more than merely a distraction but an active engaging of the imagination as the words on the printed page stimulate your creativity and cause you to enter what is essentially an altered state of consciousness." ([source](#))

Yeah, man.

As far as sleep is concerned, instead of watching TV or browsing Reddit before bed (and ending up a twitchy insomniac) try reading a book. Without that stimulation your brain gets a chance to relax and wander. If you're more relaxed before you turn off the light, chances are you might actually get some sleep and wake up feeling refreshed.

Reading Boosts Confidence and Makes You a Better Communicator

"The reading of all good books is like a conversation with the finest minds of past centuries." ~ René Descartes

One side effect of reading a lot of books is you'll end up with a rather large...vocabulary. It increases exponentially the more you read. Words nurture creativity -- having more words at your disposal will make you a better

communicator. Being able to better communicate your ideas will give you confidence in them and when you have confidence in your ideas, you have a great foundation to explore your imagination.

Reading Increases Your Knowledge Base

"The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." ~ Dr. Seuss

Warning: reading enables lifelong learning and an insatiable thirst for knowledge. Books are a window to the world -- a glimpse into to cultures past, present, and future, as interpreted by their authors and filtered through our own imaginations. You can discover an amazing amount of information about where we've been, where we're going, and how things work. The more you know, the more you'll be able to share. You'll be a better conversationalist, a quicker thinker, a better problem solver. In any sort of creative field, these are skills that come in pretty handy.

On top of the numerous health, psychological, and creative benefits of reading books, they're just plain fun. Try it out. 30 minutes a day, turn off everything but your brain and see how much better you feel. I bet you'll be surprised.

"What an astonishing thing a book is. It's a flat object made from a tree with flexible parts on which are imprinted lots of funny dark squiggles. But one glance at it and you're inside the mind of another person,

maybe somebody dead for thousands of years. Across the millennia, an author is speaking clearly and silently inside your head, directly to you. Writing is perhaps the greatest of human inventions, binding together people who never knew each other, citizens of distant epochs. Books break the shackles of time. A book is proof that humans are capable of working magic." ~ Carl Sagan ([source](#))