

3 Simple Ways to Become a Better Reader

I've loved books ever since I was a small child. As an expression of my love, I always tried to treat them carefully and respectfully, never throwing them around and **never** – Heaven forbid! – *writing in them*.

While the respect my younger self had for books was certainly praiseworthy, I discovered that my determination to not write in them may have been misguided. According to William Thayer, author of the 1893 book [*The Ethics of Success*](#), there are three ways an individual can enhance his critical thinking and comprehension skills through reading:

1. Write in the Margins

Writing thoughts and comments in the margins enables the reader to have a running conversation with the author, who may – depending on the reading material – just happen to be one of the wisest people in the world. Such a conversation helps the reader maintain focus, learn to watch for minor details on which to ponder and question, and strengthen his mental debate skills without the pressure of an audience.

2. Keep a Notebook

According to Thayer, keeping a notebook of quotes and other interesting facts gleaned while reading was a regular practice of Benjamin Franklin, who maintained that this was:

“[T]he best method of imprinting such particulars on your memory, where they will be ready, either for practice on some future occasion, if they are matters of utility, or, at least, to adorn and improve your conversation....”

3. Begin a Daily Thought Journal

Beyond keeping a notebook while reading, *The Ethics of*

Success suggests that an individual “write at least one short sentence in his note-book each day, upon some subject uppermost in his thoughts.” Doing so not only helps individuals digest their thoughts, but it also poses questions and issues to answer while reading.

Judging from Thayer’s three tips, it seems my race as a child to get through each book was also misguided. If we truly want to glean the most knowledge and understanding from the books we read, it seems that the “slow and steady” method wins.?

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