

Daniel Webster's Secret to Intellectual Growth

If you've been following Intellectual Takeout for some time, you've probably discovered that we're big fans of reading.

Part of our encouragement for reading stems from the fact that nearly [one in three Americans](#) didn't read a book in 2015.

That's a problem, particularly since reading expands our thoughts and equips us to make informed decisions about ourselves, about our beliefs, and even about the people we [elect as our leaders](#).

But [reading alone](#) will not make us well-educated, thinking individuals.

I was reminded of this fact when I stumbled upon a statement the great orator Daniel Webster made to Charles Sumner in the early to mid-1800s. [Webster said](#):

"In my education I have found that conversation with the intelligent men I have had the good fortune to meet has done more for me than books ever did; for I learn more from them in a talk of half an hour than I could possibly learn from their books. Their minds, in conversation, come into intimate contact with my own mind; and I absorb certain secrets of their power, whatever may be its quality, which I could not have detected in their works. Converse, converse, CONVERSE with living men, face to face, and mind to mind, – that is one of the best sources of knowledge."

In today's world of email, text messages, and snapchat, it's easy to keep our face-to-face conversations to a minimum. Why waste the time or experience the awkwardness that sometimes results from a discussion with others when you can dash off a

written message?

But in ditching verbal communication and discussion for convenience's sake, are we denying ourselves the opportunity of absorbing the wisdom of other individuals? If we want to learn and grow intellectually, do we not only need to read great ideas, but discuss them with others as well?

Image Credit: {[PD-US](#)}