

# Harvard Article from 1863 Offers 3 Simple Rules for Reading

We all know how important reading is. It [benefits relationships](#). It builds [language development](#). And reading books has even been found to [lengthen one's life](#).

Such knowledge causes many of us to be aghast at the fact that more than [one in four](#) Americans didn't read a book last year.

But what about those of us who *do* read? Are we maximizing our time and effort?

In September of 1863, Harvard University included a [brief article](#) on reading in its monthly magazine. The article asked the questions of "What shall I read?" and "How shall I read?" answering the first by suggesting a balanced diet of history, novels, and poetry.

The answer to the second question, however, is best presented by the following three points:

## 1. Be Careful in Selection

According to *Harvard Magazine*, "It is utterly impossible to become thoroughly acquainted with every author who has ever written anything worthy of attention." The solution to this problem, the article notes, is to choose a few select authors and become [well-acquainted with them](#).

## 2. Aim for Quality over Quantity

Instead of racing through as many books as possible, Harvard's second piece of advice to the reader is to take it slow and make sure that the content is mastered.

## 3. Be an Engaged Reader

Along with mastering content, Harvard suggests that [readers](#)

[interact](#) with the material through asking questions, arguing, or making comments on the material:

*“The bare perusal of a book benefits the mind but little. It is only as our author calls forth our attention, fixes our mind upon his statements, incites in us thought, even draws us forth to dispute some of his positions, that he benefits us.”*

American society is inundated with the written word. So much so, that I wonder if it scares many individuals away from picking up a book because they simply don't know where to start or how they will ever plow through the mammoth pile of options.

If such is the situation you find yourself in, why not take Harvard's advice and pick a [handful of authors](#) to slowly digest and learn from?

Image Credit: Richard Peter [bit.ly/1c11Dr7](https://bit.ly/1c11Dr7)