

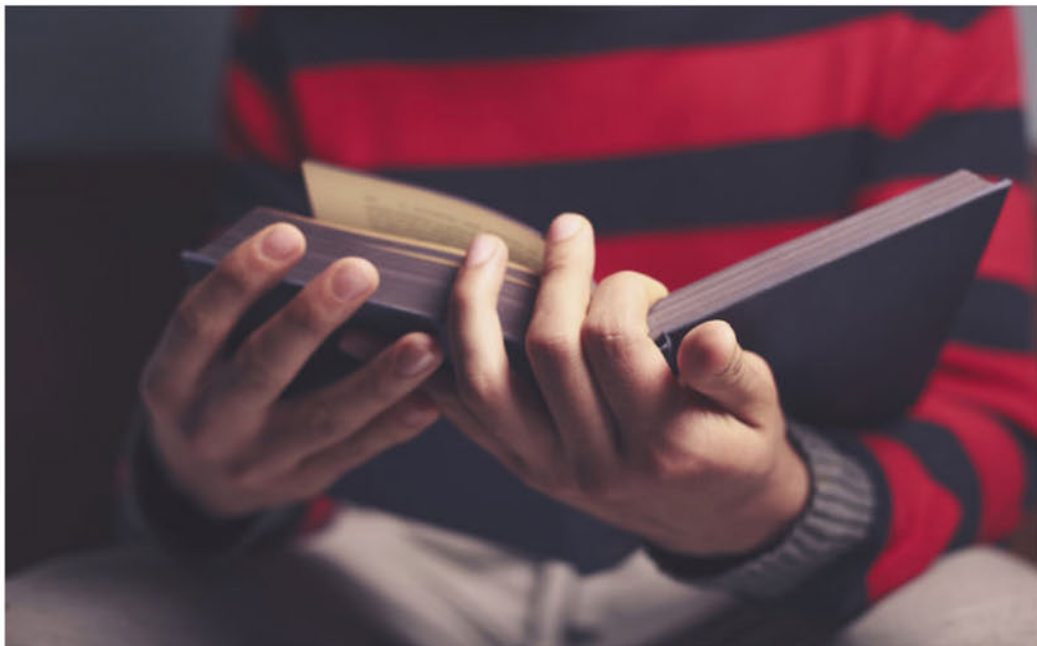
## 7 Reasons To Choose 'Real' Books -- At Least Sometimes

**Change your media; change the world!**



Claire Fallon  
Books and Culture Writer, The Huffington Post

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Twitter trolling. Interoffice email. Netflix binges. Spreadsheet drudgery.

Not everyone in the U.S. works in front of a glowing monitor, and not everyone is addicted to TV and digitized distractions. But the use of computers both at home and at work seems only to be rising.

A 2013 study suggested that American adults are [rapidly expanding their online time](#); the average time spent on the web was just three hours and 14 minutes a day in 2010, but by 2013 it had risen nearly two full hours, to five hours and nine minutes. While time spent reading print and listening to the radio was shown to be falling slightly over these three years, TV time remained steady at around four and a half hours a day. Overall, even the non-office workers who aren't in front of computers all day could be spending around a full work day's worth of time in front of a screen each day.

Print -- a notable loser in the survey, clocking barely 30 minutes in an average day -- might be a dinosaur in the era of cheap e-readers and tablets. On the other hand, all this screen time isn't an unalloyed good. Reading your books on paper instead of a Kindle can be a great way to disconnect and reset. Here are seven reasons to do your reading on paper whenever possible -- and save your screens for when it really counts.

### **Strengthen your reading comprehension, maybe!**

This possible effect, if real, may be related to print text's lack of extraneous distractions. The science on the matter is preliminary and mixed, but there is [some evidence](#) that reading in print rather than on a screen promotes better comprehension and [retention](#) of the material. One study suggested that readers may skip over or skim the text in favor of distracting digital enhancements, like animated graphics. Another noted that readers using screens struggled more to recall the sequencing of events, leading the researchers to posit that the lack of physical markers, such as the location on a page of a certain sentence, made it more difficult to keep track of the narrative.

It's too early to be sure why e-readers aren't quite keeping pace, or if the gap is being accurately measured, but it's worth giving an old-fashioned book a try, just in case the newfangled contraption is slightly muddling your comprehension. Perhaps not a big deal for a breezy beach read, but if you're hoping to take something substantial away from a book, it may be worth picking it up instead of downloading it.

### **Feel a connection to the earth!**

E-readers have the aura of an environmentally conscious alternative to tree-killing paper books, but the reality is [a bit more complicated](#). Each e-reader's production consumes enormous amounts of water, minerals and fossil fuel, not to mention the energy needed to keep the e-reader charged. And while paper books do consume other resources, like tree pulp, it's not entirely clear which has the more damaging environmental impact.

Paper production can be incredibly damaging, clear-cutting forests for quick lumber grabs, but trees are a renewable resource we can foster and use thoughtfully. Future Library, a project by artist Katie Paterson, [emphasizes this loving relationship](#) by planting and marking out 1,000 trees in Norway to cut down and use to print 100 new literary works in 100 years. The project "involves ecology, the interconnectedness of things," Paterson told HuffPost.

There is one beautiful thing about the connection a paper book has to the environment: you can see and feel the material the earth gave to make it. A downloaded story feels like it lives in the ether; it seems almost cost-free. When you hold a book in your hands, you can feel the slight roughness of the wood pulp from a tree that gave its life for this text, a potent reminder, if you're paying attention, of how precious each book is and how interwoven our world is.

### **Enjoy the beauty of the book's full design!**

If you feel this way about books, you probably already read the print variety, but for the record: Books are beautiful. At least a lot of them are. The cover art, the font, the page numbers -- every aspect of the book's physical design has typically been carefully crafted to form a harmonious whole with the text. Writer Adrienne Raphel [admitted](#) this week on The Paris Review Daily, "I'm a stickler for fonts when I read; it's one of the reasons I lug around paper books instead of a Kindle."

E-readers, at least as of now, aren't optimized for book design enjoyment. On the Kindle, you can typically choose from several fonts, include the [in-house Bookerly](#). The perfectly selected typography, the elegant cover on view every time you flip the book shut, the pleasant texture of the pages, the whiff of bookstore scent -- reading on a screen encompasses none of these experiences. Don't miss out.

At the very least, when you go back to your laptops and Nooks, you'll appreciate the bluish glow and Internet access so much more.

*And you: How do you like to read? Analog? Digital? A healthy mix of both?*



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### **Give your eyes a break from screens!**

Not to sound alarmist, but staring at computer screens for hours at a time isn't exactly the kindest thing to do to your eyes, and many of us already do it all day at work. It's a bit dramatic to suggest we're ruining our eyes doing this -- we're probably not -- but we are making our eyes work extra hard to stare at the glaring surface. The constant strain can lead to [computer vision syndrome](#) (CVS), which might leave you with headaches, burning eyes or blurred vision.

So unwinding with a "Law & Order" marathon or catching up on your favorite blogs might seem like just the indulgence you need and deserve, but it's not giving your eyes the TLC they need. If your eyes aren't too tired or blurry to keep open, soothe them with a couple hours staring at the restful off-whites and blacks of a real book's pages. No flickering, no glare reflecting off the screen, just old-fashioned ink on paper. Ahhhhh.

### **Exercise your arms by holding a real book over your head!**

It can be inconvenient to lug a book, especially a hardcover or over-400-page book, around town. It can be even more annoying to relax in bed with such books, pages flapping as you struggle to prevent the weight of *Infinite Jest* from crashing into your nose with only the fragile scaffolding of your pencil-thin arms. Sometimes a Kindle is just more convenient. Safer even.

But other times, don't you want to challenge yourself? Don't you want to strengthen your mind and your arms simultaneously, all while lying in your comfortable bed on a Sunday morning? Plus, feeling the sheer weight of the book you're reading keeps you in touch with what you're taking in -- not just another Internet article like this one, but a hefty work of literature, something with so many pages it's actually hard to lift. That's kind of crazy, in a cool way.

### **Close off distractions and concentrate completely!**

If you grew up without constant access to a cell phone or the Internet, only to later acquire them, think back on those pre-connected days. They weren't perfect, and maybe you watched a lot of Nickelodeon marathons, but without the ever-present temptation of just checking email or Facebook or Twitter or Instagram *one more time*, you were probably able to get through activities without interruption a lot more frequently. Even voracious readers [have admitted](#) that the advent of smartphones and WiFi has chipped away at their concentration, that the ding of an incoming email or the temptation of checking the likes on their latest photo makes it hard to immerse themselves in a book, and studies [have backed this up](#).

Picking up a paperback doesn't exactly reverse the sands of time, but reading in a device-free environment might help. Clear the area of tablets, smartphones, smart watches, smart TVs, laptops, and, yes, desktops. Turn off pesky notifications so you won't hear them from the next room and find yourself wondering. Then, and only then, open a book and pretend your social media accounts don't even exist for a few hours. Without interrupting yourself to tweet ([#amreading](#)) every few minutes, you'll be surprised at how deeply you can throw yourself in something as analog as a book.