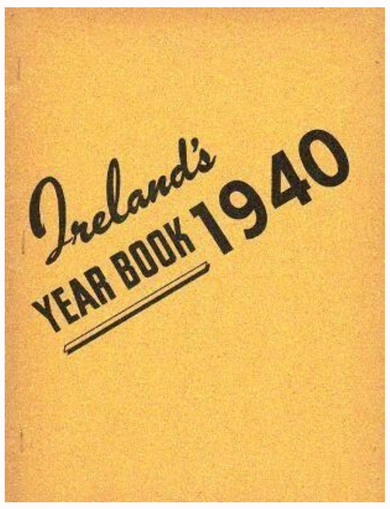


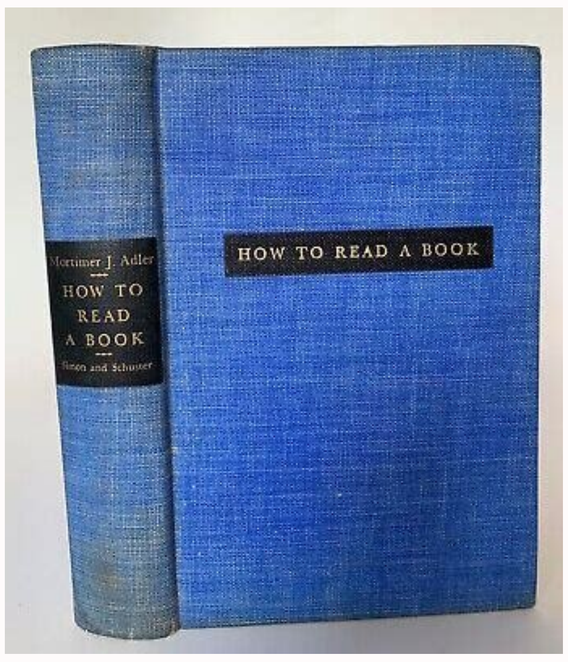
I am not robot!

How to read a book 1940

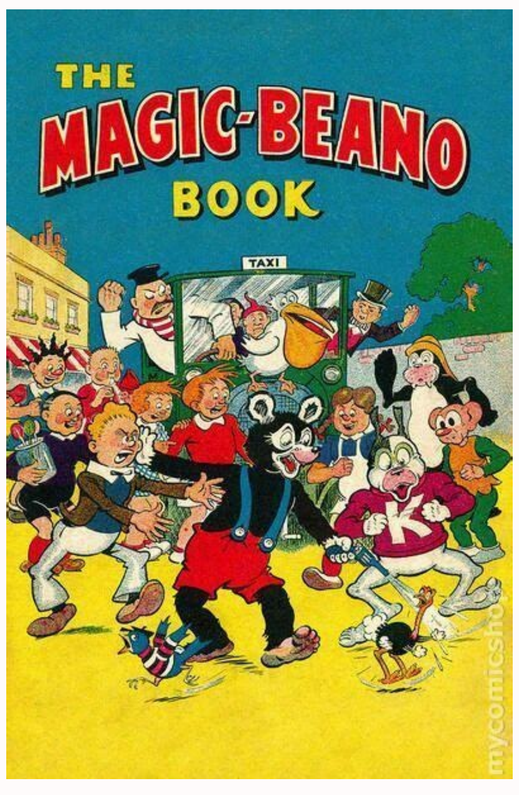
With half a million copies in print, How to Read a Book is the best and most successful guide to reading comprehension for the general reader, completely rewritten and updated with new material. A CNN Book of the Week: "Explains not just why we should read books, but how we should read them. It's masterfully done." –Farheed ZakariaOriginally published in 1940, this book is a rare phenomenon, a living classic that introduces and elucidates the various levels of reading and how to achieve them—from elementary reading, through systematic skimming and inspectional reading, to speed reading. Readers will learn when and how to "judge a book by its cover," and also how to X-ray it, read critically, and extract the author's message from the text. Also included is instruction in the different techniques that work best for reading particular genres, such as practical books, imaginative literature, plays, poetry, history, science and mathematics, philosophy and social science works. Finally, the authors offer a recommended reading list and supply reading tests you can use measure your own progress in reading skills, comprehension, and speed. How do you read a book?Look at the cover, probably glance at the blurb; run your eye down the table of contents, perhaps; possibly rifle through the book... then plunge right in into Chapter One.Right?Wrong! According to Mortimer J.



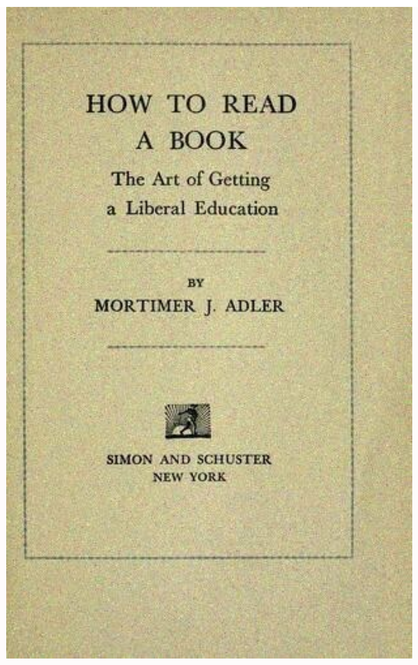
Also included is instruction in the different techniques that work best for reading particular genres, such as practical books, imaginative literature, plays, poetry, history, science and mathematics, philosophy and social science works. Finally, the authors offer a recommended reading list and supply reading tests you can use measure your own progress in reading skills, comprehension, and speed. How do you read a book?Look at the cover, probably glance at the blurb; run your eye down the table of contents, perhaps; possibly rifle through the book... then plunge right in into Chapter One.Right?Wrong! According to Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, the authors of How to Read a Book.According to them, this is only the first level of reading, called “Elementary” reading: and this is the only level the majority of readers in this world have reached. They posit three more levels: “Inspectional”, “Analytical” and “Syntopic”, each one more advanced than the previous. The major portion of the book is devoted to analytic reading, followed by brief exposition on the syntopic. It is the aim of the authors to make each reader of this tome into an analytic reader at least, if not a syntopic one: it is my opinion that they only succeed partially, but let’s go into that after analysing each of the levels as defined by the authors.Elementary reading we have already seen. belagekote In inspectional reading, you first skim the book as a whole; give it a “once-over”, as it is. The authors, ever practical, suggest six steps to do this – most of them self-evident and what any serious reader usually does with an expository book (this book is mostly about reading expository material and of limited value in reading literature and poetry, but more about that later). The steps are:1. fumajo Read the title and the preface2. Study the table of contents3. Check the index4. cugavaroxuza Read the blurb5. Look at the main chapters6. Skim the book, reading it here and thereNext, read the book through fast, without getting stuck at the difficult places. If the book deserves our serious attention, we can come back to those difficult places in our next reading. The advantage of this “rapid-fire” approach is that we do not waste time on a book which deserves only a superficial reading.
In the authors’ own words: “Every book should be read no more slowly than it deserves, and no more quickly than you can read it with satisfaction and comprehension.”Analytical ReadingThe next level, analytical reading, requires the reader to be demanding: the more you demand, the more you can extract out of a book. To do this, one has to ask four questions:1. What is the book about, as a whole?2. What is being said in detail, and how?3. Is the book true, in whole or part?4. What of it?How ask these four questions is explained in detail, in the remaining part of the book.Analytical reading has three stages. The first one is mainly concerned with classifying the book, and understanding its aim and structure. To do this, the authors suggest four rules.1. You must know what kind of book you are reading, and you should know as early in the process as possible, preferably before you begin to read.2. State the unity of the whole book in a single sentence, or at most a few sentences (a short paragraph).3. Set forth the major parts of the book, and show how these are organised into a whole, by being ordered to one another and to the unity of the whole.4. Find out what the author’s problems were.The first rule classifies (“pigeonholes”) the book, by affixing it to a category, genre, etc.: the second is used to create a précis: the third expands the précis into an outline, thus revealing the underlying structure (“X-Raying” the book, as the authors name it) and the fourth defines the purpose of the book. The author presumably wrote it for a reason: he had some questions at the beginning, which he has presumably tried to answer through the book. The reader has to find out what these questions are.If the first stage of analytical reading is related to the what , the second is related to the how ; how has the author attempted to solve the problem with which he started out. For this stage also, Adler and Van Doren proposes four rules.1. Come to terms with the author by interpreting his key words.2. Grasp the author’s leading propositions by dealing with his most important sentences. 3. Know the author’s arguments by finding them in, or constructing them out of, sequences of sentences.4. Determine which of his problems the author has solved, and which he has not: and as to the latter, decide which the author knew he had failed to solve.The argument here that any author, putting forth an argument, will use certain key words and terms (for example “natural selection” and “evolution” by Darwin in The Origin of Species). It is the reader’s duty to come to terms with the author, so that he does not misinterpret the author’s intentions by misreading the terms. Then on, it is an exercise in logic by understanding the propositions and arguments. This is not as difficult as it looks: in fact, we do it all the time, even though the exact logical terms may be unfamiliar to us. A proposition is nothing but the meaning contained within a declarative sentence: and arguments what the author uses to prove the truth of the proposition.The fourth step is a little more difficult for the lay reader, and it will only come through practice. One needs to find out which of the problems presented the author had been able to solve: and if he had been unable to solve some, whether he knew he had failed or not.



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Skim the book, reading it here and thereNext, read the book through fast, without getting stuck at the difficult places. If the book deserves our serious attention, we can come back to those difficult places in our next reading. The advantage of this “rapid-fire” approach is that we do not waste time on a book which deserves only a superficial reading. In the authors’ own words: “Every book should be read no more slowly than it deserves, and no more quickly than you can read it with satisfaction and comprehension.”Analytical ReadingThe next level, analytical reading, requires the reader to be demanding: the more you demand, the more you can extract out of a book. To do this, one has to ask four questions:1. What is the book about, as a whole?2. What is being said in detail, and how?3. lohagucecuro Is the book true, in whole or part?4. What of it?How ask these four questions is explained in detail, in the remaining part of the book.Analytical reading has three stages. 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Finally, the authors offer a recommended reading list and supply reading tests you can use measure your own progress in reading skills, comprehension, and speed. How do you read a book?Look at the cover, probably glance at the blurb; run your eye down the table of contents, perhaps; possibly rifle through the book... then plunge right in into Chapter One.Right?Wrong! According to Mortimer J.



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The steps are:1. Read the title and the preface2. Study the table of contents3. Check the index4. Read the blurb5. Look at the main chapters6. Skim the book, reading it here and thereNext, read the book through fast, without getting stuck at the difficult places. If the book deserves our serious attention, we can come back to those difficult places in our next reading. The advantage of this “rapid-fire” approach is that we do not waste time on a book which deserves only a superficial reading. In the authors’ own words: “Every book should be read no more slowly than it deserves, and no more quickly than you can read it with satisfaction and comprehension.”Analytical ReadingThe next level, analytical reading, requires the reader to be demanding: the more you demand, the more you can extract out of a book. To do this, one has to ask four questions:1. What is the book about, as a whole?2. What is being said in detail, and how?3. Is the book true, in whole or part?4. What of it?How ask these four questions is explained in detail, in the remaining part of the book.Analytical reading has three stages. The first one is mainly concerned with classifying the book, and understanding its aim and structure. To do this, the authors suggest four rules.1. You must know what kind of book you are reading, and you should know as early in the process as possible, preferably before you begin to read.2. State the unity of the whole book in a single sentence, or at most a few sentences (a short paragraph).3. Set forth the major parts of the book, and show how these are organised into a whole, by being ordered to one another and to the unity of the whole.4. Find out what the author’s problems were.The first rule classifies (“pigeonholes”) the book, by affixing it to a category, genre, etc.: the second is used to create a précis: the third expands the précis into an outline, thus revealing the underlying structure (“X-Raying” the book, as the authors name it) and the fourth defines the purpose of the book. The author presumably wrote it for a reason: he had some questions at the beginning, which he has presumably tried to answer through the book. The reader has to find out what these questions are.If the first stage of analytical reading is related to the what , the second is related to the how ; how has the author attempted to solve the problem with which he started out. For this stage also, Adler and Van Doren proposes four rules.1. Come to terms with the author by interpreting his key words.2. Grasp the author’s leading propositions by dealing with his most important sentences. 3. Know the author’s arguments by finding them in, or constructing them out of, sequences of sentences.4. Determine which of his problems the author has solved, and which he has not: and as to the latter, decide which the author knew he had failed to solve.The argument here that any author, putting forth an argument, will use certain key words and terms (for example “natural selection” and “evolution” by Darwin in The Origin of Species). It is the reader’s duty to come to terms with the author, so that he does not misinterpret the author’s intentions by misreading the terms. Then on, it is an exercise in logic by understanding the propositions and arguments.
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Here, the reader is engaged in researching books about one basic idea.



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It outlines a methodology, the diligent following of which will guarantee results, according to its authors. It well may, for the major part of the book devoted to analytical reading gave me some insights on how to tackle books on difficult subjects like philosophy and political theory (the two stars are for that). But the book is extremely boring, and the authors’ insistence on applying their favourite methodology to all sorts of books was stretching things a bit (moreover, it takes all the fun out of reading!). And syntopic reading may make sense to an undergraduate preparing a dissertation, but is of little use to anybody else.If anyone wants to read this book, I would recommend an inspectional reading concentrating mainly on the methodology of analytical reading only. The other parts are not worth the time spent on it.I purchased a copy, but the book seems to be available free on the net (no idea about copyright issues!), so go ahead and try it if you want.
Statutory warning: boredom ahead. As far as I know, How to Read a Book was first published in 1940; this is what the preface to the 1972 edition states.
There was only one revision, namely the one that the original author, Mortimer J. Adler, wrote in co-operation with the writer and editor Charles Van Doren (incidentally the son of poet and literature professor Mark Van Doren, who died in 1972). All other editions I am aware of are reprints of either the 1940 edition (e.g. in 1967 with a different subtitle) or the 1972 edition. Based on this, the choice is between two versions: the 1940 edition by Adler (and reprints thereof) or the 1972 edition by Adler and Van Doren (or reprints thereof). The preface to the second edition mentions what has been added since the 1940 edition. More specifically (emphasis mine): The exposition in Part Three of the different ways to approach different kinds of reading materials—practical and theoretical books, imaginative literature (lyric poetry, epics, novels, plays), history, science and mathematics, social science, and philosophy, as well as reference books, current journalism, and even advertising—is the most extensive addition that has been made. So if you are interested in choosing an edition that would be more useful for reading literary works, the 1972 edition or its reprints appear to be the best choice.