



E-Book

# *How to read a book ?*

Sheikh : *Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid*



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## How to read a book ?

All praise is for Allaah, we praise Him, seek His forgiveness, and seek His refuge from the evils of ourselves and the evils of our actions. Whoever Allaah guides, then none can misguide them, and whoever He misguides, then none can guide them. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship besides Allaah the Exalted, Alone, without any partners, and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

### As to what follows:

All praise belongs to Allaah the Exalted who created, first of all, the pen, and Said: 'Write,' causing it to write everything that will occur until the Day of Resurrection. Likewise, thanks belong to Him the Exalted who has favored His slaves with the blessing of the pen and writing, and mentioned it when He Said (what means): **{Num. By the pen and what they inscribe}** [Qur'aan 68:1] So, His taking an oath shows the greatness of the pen and writing, because Allaah the Exalted only swears by something great.

Of His favors that He has bestowed on His slaves is the blessing of eloquence that He mentioned in His Statement (what means): **{Created man, [And] taught him eloquence.}** [Qur'aan 55:3-4]

Imaam Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"Then, reflect on the favor of humankind, in terms of both types of eloquence, verbal and written. So, in the first Soorah that He the Exalted revealed to His Messenger, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, He Said (what means): {Recite in the name of your Lord who created - Created man from a clinging substance. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous - Who taught by the pen - Taught man that which he knew not.}* [Qur'aan 96:1-5]."

He then said:



*“Teaching through the pen, which is the greatest gift and favor He the Exalted has given His slaves, since through it, sciences become eternal, realities are established, words of advice are known, testimonies are preserved, the accounts of dealings between people are precisely kept, and the news of the past is recorded for those who remain and who will come later. Had it not been for writing, news from certain period of time would be cut off from other times, traditions would be obliterated, rulings would be confused, and the latter generations would not know the ways and methods of the predecessors. The most confusion that occurs within people in matters of their religion happens due to forgetfulness that wipes some aspects of knowledge from their hearts. So, Allaah the Exalted gave them the book as a container that preserves, like other containers that preserve goods from perishing and breaking; so, the favor of Allaah the Exalted by teaching through pen after the Qur’aan is of the greatest of favors.”*

He the Exalted is the One that taught humankind how to write, as He Said (what means): *{ Taught man that which he knew not. }* [Qur’aan 96:5] He the Exalted taught them to speak, and gave them the heart that they can understand with, the tongue to translate with, and the fingertips to write with. *“How many signs are we heedless of regarding the topic of teaching by pen? Pause to think regarding the act of writing, and reflect on your state while you hold the pen, an inanimate object, place it on the paper, another inanimate object, but various forms of wisdom, sciences, artistic notes, lectures, poems, texts, and answers to issues are born of that.”*

Allaah the Exalted revealed the greatest Book, which is the Qur’aan, and recommended us to read it. Likewise, His



Messenger, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, urged us to read from the copy of the Qur'aan. The Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, achieved a great and lofty accomplishment, which is compiling the Qur'aan and making copies of it. They read from these copies of the Qur'aan to the point that some of them were torn due to the abundant reading. The knowledge of the Companions and their followers was in the chest; their chests were stores of knowledge for them. They did not write the *Hadeeth* in the beginning, rather, they would be told these *Ahaadeeth* verbatim and would memorize them. They feared that if they were to write the *Hadeeth*, it would be mixed up with the Qur'aan, and that it would affect the strength of memory. However, when the Qur'aan became well established in their hearts and the people knew it precisely, and when the chains of narration became long and hard to memorize, their determination and intents turned to writing. At this stage, the *Sunnah* was written, and knowledge was gathered in records and books. Thus, books became something that chains down knowledge, as has come in the narration that states: **“Chain knowledge down with writing.”**

Another aspect that shows the legislated nature of this action is when Allaah the Exalted Said (what means): *{And do not be [too] weary to write it, whether it is small or large, for its [specified] term. That is more just in the sight of Allaah and stronger as evidence and more likely to prevent doubt between you}* [Qur'aan 2:282] *“So, when Allaah the Exalted ordered that the religion be written in order to preserve it, out of caution for it, and out of care that any doubt enters it, then that means that knowledge—the preservation of which is harder than the preservation of the religion – is more worthy of being allowed to be written, out of fear of doubts entering it.”*



## The status of books with Muslim scholars

Books of knowledge have a very great status in the hearts of scholars. It is their associate that they never get bored of, their companion in travel, the table that they partake from in gatherings and their solace in seclusion. It was said to Ibn Al-Mubaarak, may Allaah have mercy on him: *"O Abu `AbdAr-Rahmaan, you should go and sit with your companions."* He said: *"When I am at home, I am sitting with the Companions of Muhammad, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam."* Meaning, he was referring to reading books. Shafeeq ibn Ibraaheem Al-Balkhi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"We said to Ibn Al-Mubaarak: 'When you pray with us, why do you not sit with us?' He said: 'I sit with the Taabi`oon and the Sahaabah?' We said: 'Where are the Taabi`oon and the Sahaabah?' He said: 'I refer to my knowledge and come to awareness of their statements and actions. What should I do with you folks? You sit there and backbite others.'"*

Az-Zuhri, may Allaah have mercy on him, had a huge collection of books and used to take them everywhere to such an extent that his wife said: *"By Allaah, these books are more severe on me than three co-wives!"* It was said to one of the scholars: *"What brings you solace?"* At this, he struck his books with his hand, and said: *"These do."* It was then said: *"What about people?"* He said: *"Those in these books."*

The scholars used to read all the time. Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"I know of those who would be ailing from a headache or a fever, and their books were by their heads. Whenever they would wake up, they would read from them, and if they faced difficulty or tiredness, they would place them [and would rest]. A doctor visited him once in such a state and said: 'This is impermissible for you.'"*



It was reported from Al-Hasan Al-Lu'lu'i, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"Forty years of my life elapsed, and I never got up or slept except that a book is on my chest."* Others used to sleep with their notebooks surrounding their bed; they would read from them when they awoke from sleep, and before sleeping. Al-Haafith Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdaadi, may Allaah have mercy on him, used to walk with a volume in his hand, while reading it. Some other scholars used to give a condition to those who invited them that they should have a place in the assembly to place a book so that they could read it. Actually, some of them would even burn their turbans with the lantern that they had placed before them for reading, without knowing it until strands of their hair were burnt.

Abu Al-'Abbaas Al-Mubarrid, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"I have never seen any people more keen on knowledge than three individuals: Al-Jaahith – and he was a Mu'tazili person of innovation, Al-Fat-h ibn Khaaqaan, and Ismaa'eel ibn Is-haaq Al-Qaadhi. As for Al-Jaahith, when he would place a book before him, he would read it from beginning to end, regardless of the book. As for Al-Fat-h, he used to carry a book in his slipper. When he would go before Al-Mutawakkil to urinate or pray, he would remove the book and read while walking, until he reached the place he needed to go, then would do the same on the way back, until he reached his area of sitting. As for Ismaa'eel ibn Is-haaq, then I never entered on him at all, except that he had a book that he was reading, or was flipping through books to find a book to read."*

The keenness of the pious predecessors and Muslim scholars in collecting and reading books was truly great. Ibn Al-Jawzi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"While informing of myself, I can never have my fill of reading books. If I find a book that I have not read yet, then it is as if I have come across a treasure. If I were to*





*say that I have read twenty-thousand volumes, it would have been even more than that, and I am still seeking knowledge."*

Others said: *"If I find a book to be good and hoped that it would be beneficial, and found that it was actually beneficial, I would constantly look at how much there was left, out of fear of finishing the book."*

They used to spend abundant wealth in acquiring books; in fact, perhaps one would spend all that they owned in that. Al-Fayrooz Abaadi, may Allaah have mercy on him, purchased books worthy fifty-thousand gold coins, and he would never travel without books that he would read every time he would stop in his travels.

Some scholars would take their books into account when mending and stitching clothes. For example, Abu Daawood, may Allaah have mercy on him, used to have a wide sleeve and a tight sleeve. It was brought up to him, and he said: *"The wide one is for books, and the tight one is not needed."* Some scholars would have book cases, and they even had three copies of every book they owned.

The extent of their keenness on books is seen in that they wrote special books and chapters regarding the etiquettes of the student of knowledge with their book, how to transcribe, urging that the student gets good paper, the description of the pen they write with, its ink, and its colour, the ways of preservation of books, and so on, including other etiquettes.





## The special qualities of books

A book is a good neighbor, a humble and submissive teacher, and a voluntary companion that never disobeys you; have you ever seen a teacher that is submissive to their student? That is how a book is submissive to a reader. It is a qualified companion, and a vibrant tree that always bears fruit. It gathers good points of wisdom, developed intellects, and news of the previous generations and distant lands. It purifies the intellect, sharpens the mind, broadens the horizons, strengthens the will, provides solace in solitude, benefits and does not take benefit, gives and does not take.

A book is:

*“The best companion and equipment, and the best thing that provides solace during times of solitude. It is the best way to come to know of strange countries, and is the best fellow and foreigner. It is the best delegate and guest. If you wish, you could laugh at its rare anecdotes, be amazed by its amazing benefits, be distracted by its exquisites, and be saddened by its admonishments that gather the first, last, hidden, and apparent. It speaks on behalf of the dead, and informs of the living. It keeps a secret better than the one who has the secret. It preserves trust better than the most trustworthy people. It does not treat you with plotting, trickery, or hypocrisy. It does not trick you through lies.*

*A book is something that if you look in it, it prolongs your joy, enriches your nature, makes your tongue eloquent (in speaking), improves your foundation and makes your words loftier. Through books, you can learn more in a month than you could in a lifetime from the mouths of men. A book gives you at night just as it yields to you during the day. It gives you in travel, just as it yields to you when at home. It does*



*not become sick in sleep, and is not affected by fatigue of travel."*

Books do not know of time or place lapses or frames; likewise, they do not know of geographical boundaries. Thus, the reader can live [through them] in all times, during all kingdoms and areas, and can accompany the greats and their actions, even if it takes years.

Reflect on the situation of the Muslim when they read the stories of the prophets in the Noble Qur'aan. They lived in distant areas, ages ago. With that said, they read their stories, as if they live with them. So, they refer to the stories of Ibraaheem (Abraham), may Allaah exalt his mention, Is-haaq (Isaac), may Allaah exalt his mention, Ya`qoob (Jacob), may Allaah exalt his mention, Nooh (Noah), may Allaah exalt his mention, Daawood (David), may Allaah exalt his mention, Sulaymaan (Solomon), may Allaah exalt his mention, Ayyoob (Job), may Allaah exalt his mention, Yoosuf (Joseph), may Allaah exalt his mention, Moosa (Moses), may Allaah exalt his mention, Haaroon (Aaron), may Allaah exalt his mention, Zakariyya (Zachariah), may Allaah exalt his mention, Yahya (John), may Allaah exalt his mention, `Eesa (Jesus), may Allaah exalt his mention, Ilyas (Elias), may Allaah exalt his mention, Ismaa`eel (Ishamel), may Allaah exalt his mention, Al-Yasa` (Elisha), may Allaah exalt his mention, Yoonus (Jonas), may Allaah exalt his mention, Lote (Lot), may Allaah exalt his mention, and others, including other prophets and righteous folk whose stories are mentioned in the Qur'aan and *Sunnah*. We read their news and it is as if we live with them. Reflect on this blessing that only occurred to us through books, what a great blessing and favor they are!



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## Why should we read ?

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The Muslim reads for the following reasons:

- To earn reward for reading, such as when reading the Noble Qur'aan.
- To learn religious sciences and gain understanding of their religion.
- By repetition in reading, one can memorize.
- To learn of the plots of the disbelievers, and to beware of the doubts of the hypocrites and deviants.
- To develop their linguistic abilities and to earn beneficial knowledge of this world.
- To keep themselves busy away from false practices, because if you do not keep your soul busy with obedience, it will keep you busy with disobedience.
- To relax and be at ease in doing a lawful action.

There are also other reasons that revolve around intents of the legislation and benefits in this life.

Going by the methodology of the ignorant, a people are considered cultured if they include large numbers of people who read, regardless of what they read. People who adhere to this ignorant method read for the sake of reading, and engage in arts for the sake of the arts.

Thus, they make reading an end in itself, and do not consider it a means, which is why they read everything, without examination or purification, and without any distinction. As for the Muslim, reading, to them, is a means to realizing a goal, which is earning the pleasure of Allaah the Exalted.



Thus, the Muslim does not read to keep pace with the scholars, to argue with the foolish, or to gain the people's attention, Allaah the Exalted will enter whoever does that into Hellfire. Moreover, they do not read to find missteps and search for mistakes, because that contends with sincerity. They also do not read what does not benefit them in their religion or life, because their time is more precious than that.

In our times we have been afflicted by the problem of acquiring without purification or examination. Reading books of authors who have different methodologies without critique or differentiation has resulted, in Muslim societies, in many individuals fitting the bill of the 'yes-man reader,' who would be a trumpet that magnifies the attacks of the enemies of Islaam, because they do not discern between the good and bad. As a result, they learn what harms them and does not benefit them, and read what the enemies of Islaam have written, and present and spread that among people without any understanding or awareness.



## How can our reading be conscious ?

There is no doubt that the Muslim reader must have a sound and strong creed, so that they can read with consciousness. This means that their initial reading should be setting the foundation, by hand picking what they read in the beginning, in order to build awareness, through which, if they read a book, they can scrutinize it in the light of Islaam. Foundation and education is the starting point in assessing books, and is the scale of discerning and scrutiny.

The Muslim reader must keep the scale of scrutiny in mind in the light of legislation when reading, and especially when reading doubtful or unknown books. So, they would scrutinize the book in light of the beliefs of *Ahl As-Sunnah wa Al-Jamaa`ah* and in light of what they know in terms of religious evidences, and by using what they know in terms of authentic and weak *Ahaadeeth*. This is how reading can be conscious and aware.

### Some issues that conflict with consciousness:

- Submission and blindly following everything that is written or published, as well as trusting and accepting those things without examination or scrutiny.
- Doubting facts and information that is sure and true, just because it conflicts with what is in the book.
- Being deceived by exaggeration and propaganda that is created by some books and authors. Praising the names of some writers who are innovators and hypocrites leads to exaggeration and venerating them. The mistake lies in not giving the correct value to authors, both male and female.
- Avoiding reading books by some authors of knowledge and intelligence, being affected by the



propaganda of someone who is spiteful, or listening to untrustworthy people who are trying to get people to avoid that person.

- Lack of awareness of the deviations of deviant writers who spread their innovations, misguidance, and poison through their books and articles.

**Such individuals have a few well-known methods, such as:**

- Disfiguring and mutilating texts to imply a false meaning.
- Distorting, changing, interpolating, and increasing texts.
- Mentioning texts in areas that it does not serve as evidence.
- Explaining the text in something other than its intended legislated meaning.
- Using false and fabricated *Ahaadeeth* and narrations as evidence, and ascribing statements to those who are free of those statements.
- Appealing to principles that conflict with legislation, such as rejecting an authentic text under the pretext that it conflicts with reason, and claiming that the text has an apparent and hidden meaning.
- Using the statements of people of falsehood as evidence, as well gathering them, increasing them, and mentioning them to strengthen what one is saying.
- Mentioning weak opinions and irregular views.



- Mentioning and collecting doubts, as well as casting them, but remaining silent regarding them, leaving the situation wherein they are mentioned, or responding to them with weak and foolish responses.
- Using false oaths and other confirmations in order to disburse unsalable products as regarded by legislation.
- Feigning giving aid to the religion and having protective zeal for the religion.
- Praising deviants and misguided individuals, while censuring and attacking people of knowledge and who follow the correct methodology.
- Using shining words such as freedom, reform, modernization, developing, and enlightenment.
- Using indirect methods in displaying a filthy idea, so that the reader can reach that conclusion on their own. They present false introductions and leave the false conclusions to the reader to take up. Many times, the writer feigns innocence, which is why it is important to get to know hidden meanings within a paragraph, or to read between the lines. It is important in such situations to know the beliefs of the writer and their intellectual alliances, and this becomes known by experience and by asking about the individual.

Many of the previously mentioned causes for deviation are unknown except through attaining knowledge that unveils the falseness and removes the covers of misguidance. From here, the importance of having a strong base of religious knowledge for the Muslim reader is evident. This occurs through taking the





knowledge orally from the people of knowledge and books of knowledge that are authentic, so that the awareness that is needed is built before indulging in various books. The Muslim reader should beware of these methods, as well as other methods, so that they do not acquire false information, and so that no germ, in the form of a pernicious doubt, sneaks into their soul.

- Inability to decipher the exaggerations of the writer, and being heedless in noticing contradictions that he falls in his book or books. The author might mention an idea, then contradict it after a while, or claim in the introduction that they will hold fast to sound methodology and fairness, then contradict that.

After this discussion regarding the issue of awareness, we shall move forward to speak about an important topic, which is:



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## *Alienation between people and books*

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One of the biggest problems that occurs with many people is alienation from books, and might actually be enmity at times. Many people complain of being bored or tired when they open a book, especially books that are serious. That is why we find today, a terrible phenomenon, as in, turning away from religious books that benefit, and turning towards foolish books, empty stories, magazines that have pictures and colors, and news about sports and art. Our enemies brag that the Arabs do not read, if they do read, they do not understand, and if they understand, they do not teach or know.

Another of the negative phenomena is that many graduates, after graduating, stop reading. Many teachers have to deal with their knowledge decreasing year after year, and the fact that many of them stop reading about their area of specialization, while knowledge is building up and increasing every day.

It is painful to see this rejection of acquiring books, rather, of even borrowing them from public or charity based libraries. It is quite likely that such an endowment remains useless and is not utilized due to this rejection! Another painful thing is to see many people buying books, but they are just standing in their bookshelves, gathering dust. They do not release the knowledge in them by opening and reading them. It is a familiar sight to find a book that has pages that are stuck together in some areas, as evidence that the book has not been opened.

There question remains: why do not people turn to books, and especially books that are beneficial? Why do they run from reading? Why is there a complex that some people have and why is there enmity between people and books? To answer these questions, we must come to be aware of:



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## *The causes of alienation between people and books*

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Some such causes are:

- Short attention span, becoming bored easily, lack of patience, and lack of endurance in remaining in seclusion which reading requires. This becomes clearly manifested in individuals that move a lot, like to constantly come and go, like physical activity and cannot sit in one place for a very long time.
- Not knowing the value and virtue of reading, and humankind is naturally antagonistic to what they do not know.
- Length of the book or subject.
- Mistake in beginning, such as reading an advanced book in an art before reading an easy or preliminary book. This is a mistake that results in alienation from reading.
- An author's rich language and content, such as the style of many of our respected previous scholars. It might be written for the level of the reader during that time, ineloquent and composed language that is befitting of a book of religious science. This, coupled with the decline of the linguistic level of the modern reader, as well as the rampant use of colloquial language, and abandonment of classical language of the Qur'aan renders many books indecipherable to the typical reader. Due to this, alienation becomes apparent, and people began to disparage the "yellow pages" (as they allege) even though they contain knowledge. In reality, the writings of the early scholars are few but have much



blessing, but the writings of the latter scholars are many but have very little blessing.

- Lack of knowledge regarding the terms that are repeated in the book, which becomes an impediment to understanding and reading.
- Lack of contemporaries that encourage and urge their fellows to read, or being tested with companions and friends that are abstinent from knowledge; a person is the same as their close friend.
- Exchanging beneficial works with non-beneficial works, and busying oneself with reading material that is actually harmful, such as useless magazines, sports papers, and other types of literature, in favor of beneficial books.
- Absence of encouragement for reading in society and students devoting themselves to their coursework, exclusively. In fact, universities only use abridged renditions of works, rather than vast scientific research! It is unfortunate to find that some fathers, if they find some book that is not coursework in the hands of their son, they would reprimand them and would not allow them to continue reading, but would order them to devote themselves to reading coursework, exclusively.
- Not seeking counsel in choosing and beginning books, or seeking it from those who are not deserving of being asked.
- Weak knowledge of the Arabic language, lacking in understanding its words, and lack of understanding of literary styles and formations.



- Distraction and lack of concentration. This is a problem that many readers complain of. They say that they complete a page and book without understanding anything, and read words but the mind is absent. There will be a comprehensive chapter on how to cure this problem.
- Lack of motivation and drive as well as being content with inferiority. It is as if they were just created to eat, drink, and sleep, so, they only know books by their shape and only know reading as a memory or something that they frequently speak of. Such people cannot bear putting themselves through the trouble of reading and cannot bear enduring and holding themselves before a book. Rather, they incline towards laziness and sleep. As Imaam Yahya ibn Abu Katheer, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *“Knowledge cannot be acquired while relaxing the body.”*
- Busying oneself with leisure activities such as films, soap operas, and other satellite shows throughout the day, watching sports games, playing cards, and useless gatherings. Many spend long hours in such leisure activities but are stingy in terms of sparing an hour for reading, then say, ‘We do not have time!’
- Certain individuals become busied with many things at the expense of reading. This is evidence to not giving thing their due right, and losing out on balance. Likewise, some general folk become busied with needs of livelihood and doing extra work to increase in their wealth.
- Constantly listening to tapes. There is no doubt that the spread of tapes has decreased turning to books.



Of course, the point here is not to call to destroying tapes; rather, there must be a balance between listening to tapes and reading books, as books have certain unique qualities in comparison to tapes, such as ease in searching in them, for example. One can listen to tapes during times when it is hard to read or one is excused, such as before sleep, when relaxing, when driving, when working within the home, and when arranging things. Abu Al-Barakaat, may Allaah have mercy on him, the grandfather of Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, when he wanted to shower, he would order a reader to read to him and raise his voice, so that he could listen and benefit. This is how one is keen on preserving their time.

- The prevalence of indexes in book. This is beneficial in a time when people have weak memory, the bar is low in terms of knowledge, and most people are busy in worldly pursuits. However, these indexes, apart from their many advantages, have caused weakening of the spirit of research with many people. Many students of knowledge were deprived of benefits they would have come across had it not been for the presence of indexes. This is not a call to abandon indexes, but is a reminder of the importance of reading books, and not only relying on particular matters through indexes.
- The rising prices of books.
- Substandard quality of publication, such as text that is unclear or small. Also, many printing errors, bad paper, and a drop in publication quality.



- The rarity of public libraries, the difficulty of reaching them, and the complicated nature of the process of benefitting from them.
- The feeling that many students have, in that the goal of studying is achieving certificates and earning jobs.

After this survey and review of some reasons that people are alienated from reading and turn away from it, it is time now to speak about:





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## The cure

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The cure of every deficiency and fault must, no doubt, consist of reliance on Allaah the Exalted, seeking His Help, turning to Him the Exalted through supplication, and afterwards, one must turn to utilizing other cures, such as:

- Knowing the virtue of knowledge, the nobility of its people, and clarifying the importance of reading. This is one of the main means of attaining it and getting to know of the status and blessing of the books of religious sciences. This is through various means and pulpits, such as the *Jumu`ah* sermons, lectures, books, and articles.

Some of the benefits of reading that are mentioned to encourage one to read are:

- Learning religious sciences, on which, the validity of actions revolve. Also, putting out ignorance that is a cause for censuring, falling into prohibitions, and incurring the anger of Allaah the Exalted. So, knowledge is life and light, while ignorance is death and darkness.
- Finding solace in the Speech of Allaah the Exalted, the Speech of His prophets, and the statements of the scholars.
- Getting to know various aspects of wisdom and causes of rulings in this legislation, something that helps a person remain steadfast on their religion.
- Saving time and filling it with beneficial things.



- Preventing a person from having bad companions that waste time.
- Urging and encouraging people to read, and this is through:
  - Establishing book fairs. Westerners have discovered the importance of these ideas, causing them to host events like book weeks, writers' clubs, and writers unions. No doubt, we are more worthy of every lawful idea that encourages reading. Audio-visual means should be utilized and one should benefit from the various media and means of communication in urging people to read.
  - Organizing lectures about reading, and adding sections that are methodical in schools, universities, as well as specific courses for reading, as much as possible.
  - Raising kids from a young age to love reading and books by encouraging them monetarily through prizes or giving them moral support through encouragement and picking books that the child is interested in, that consist of subjects that are suitable, use fictional style, have easy phrases, attractive colors, large letters, and while reading sentence by sentence. Also, some of their allowance should be saved to buy books. Besides, one should guide the child to care for and preserve their books. One must beware of superstitious stories that frighten the child and corrupt their imagination. One must be keen on acquiring stories that speak of the biographies of the greats



and the heroes of this *Ummah*, such as the *Sahaabah*, scholars, and generals, in order to build a model that the child emulates.

- Opening a section of the home as a library in an organized and elegant manner.
- Holding competitions with the goal of encouraging people to read, conduct research, and so forth.
- Giving books as gifts on various occasions, such as marriages, `Aqeeqah, `Eed, and so forth.
- Publishing books and distributing them at affordable prices, as well as breaking the greed and monopoly in the trade. Also, one should strive, through good doers, to release publications that are specifically meant to be given as gifts and distributed for charity purposes to people, or selling at the cost price, or at a price close to that, while exchanging gifts among people. Also, providing mailing facilities that deliver the book by mail to readers in distant or remote areas, as well as benefitting from the idea of mobile libraries.
- Reading books in stages. This is very important, to the point that success or lack thereof in reading almost revolves completely around this.

Before speaking about any details regarding the correct way to begin reading, we present the following important issue, which is:



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## *The stages of reading that a person goes through over the years*

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The original state humankind is ignorance. Allaah the Exalted Said (what means): *{And Allaah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing}* [Qur'aan 16:78] Knowledge cannot be acquired overnight, and one cannot become an avid reader who follows a correct methodology overnight. Developing the reading habit requires patience and taking it in steps.

The stages that a person goes through in developing a reading habit, in general, are the following five stages:

- **Making reading beloved to the soul and drawing close to books:**

Realizing that inculcating this habit requires a combination of methods and content that attracts and encourages people, which is present in particular subjects, such as the biography of the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, and stories.

- **Serious reading:**

This needs a great deal of patience and forcing oneself to be patience. In the beginning, the reader often feels that they have very little benefit, and that is because they are reading new topics that they have passed over for the first time. This requires some patience in understanding and digesting the information. However, the reader must not get bored, for one must be constant in order to be steadfast on the path.

- **Achievement reading:**

This is where the reader reaches a high level of understanding of what is being read, as a result of their consistency and endurance.



They overcome impediments, to the point that they understand most of what they read and can combine old and new information. At this point, they begin to feel enriched in knowledge.

- **Critical reading:**

In this stage, the milestones of the learned methodology beings complete and clear to the Muslim reader, and in this stage, the scales of religion, ability to assess, critique, and judge become developed. Based on this, they can differentiate between the mistakes of writers, and discern slips and deviations. As a result, they can read everything they pass over.

- **Investigative reading:**

In this stage, the reader proceeds into the vast horizons of the world of reading, after they have learned the fundamentals of knowledge with precision. They can enter the world of books by reading even the voluminous books, as well as other books.

After this summary of some milestones on the reader's long path, we go back to the topic:



## The right start in reading

The Muslim reader must enter this realm and should begin it correctly. Some ways to do this, are to start with:

- Easy books before hard ones.
- Small books before large references.
- Easy books in an art before advanced ones.

Some of the reasons that some people face problems and relapses when beginning reading are:

- Hastiness, which is from Satan.
- Outburst of enthusiasm that is not precisely managed.
- Exaggeration in self-confidence. The correct manner is to be confident and rely on Allaah the Exalted.

Another reason people begin on the wrong foot is a type of delusion, wherein the person says: 'I do not care if the book is big or small, hard or easy, I understand everything.' However, their humble abilities are quick to collide with the mountains of information, various strong scientific styles, chains of narrations, and the differences of the jurists. In such a situation, they are humbled and worn out and become fatigued, bored and abandon reading, and might even bid farewell to books with a deep-rooted complex .

Thus, beginning with *Tafseer* (exegesis), for example, with a big and advanced book that mentions narrations, chains of narration, various opinions, modes of recitation, differences in language, conjugation, and branches of rulings that are derived from texts, before beginning with a book that contains the meanings of various odd words, and general meanings of verses, no doubt this is



something that conflicts with wisdom and turns people away from reading. So, choosing an appropriate *Tafseer*, such as that of Ibn As-Si`di, may Allaah have mercy on him, or *Zubdat At-Tafseer*, the summarized version of the *Tafseer* of Ash-Shawkaani, may Allaah have mercy on him, is an appropriate step before reading *Tafseer* of Ibn Katheer, for example.

Likewise, beginning with books of differences in jurisprudence, which talk of the differences of the scholars, and the evidence of each opinion with details, before beginning with a book that brings one opinion in the issue along with its evidence is something that leads a beginner to alienation. It is a mistake for a person to begin reading a book of jurisprudence such as *Al-Mughni*, for example, before *Al-`Umdah*.

Also, beginning with books of biography of the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, with a book that chooses authentic narrations with an easy and summarized style with mentioning some lessons and benefits from the stories is an initial step before reading books of stories regarding military expeditions, such as *Al-Bidaayah wa An-Nihaayah* by Ibn Katheer, may Allaah have mercy on him, for example.

Likewise, beginning with a summarized and easy text in the general matters of creed, such as *Al-Waasitiyyah*, *At-Tahaawiyyah*, or *Lum`at Al-I`tiqaad*, is a step that must be taken before beginning *Al-`Aqeedah Al-Hamawiyyah*, *At-Tadmuriyyah*, *Sharh At-Tahaawiyyah*, and *Sharh As-Safaareeniyyah*, for example.

Also, reading some of the booklets of the reviver of the *Da`wah*, Shaykh Muhammad ibn `Abd Al-Wahhaab, may Allaah have mercy on him, such as *Al-Usool Ath-Thalaathah*, the text of *Kitaab At-Tawheed* along with its issues, must precede reading *Kitaab Al-Imaan* by Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him,





*Ma`arij Al-Qabool*, and extensive explanations of *Kitaab At-Tawheed*, such as *Tayseer Al-`Azeez Al-Hameed*, for example.

Further, reading a summarized explanation of An-Nawawi's *Forty Hadeeth* is something that must precede reading explanations of other *Hadeeth* texts, such as the explanations of *Buloogh Al-Maraam*, *Saheeh Al-Bukhaari*, or *Mishkaat Al-Masaabeeh*, for example.

One must bear in mind a methodology in seeking knowledge, which is that one must begin learning obligations before *Sunan* and recommended actions. One must learn the obligatory actions that are obligatory on all, and the obligatory actions that are obligatory on some individuals before voluntary and supererogatory actions.

Here, it is worth mentioning the importance of reading the books of earlier scholars as well as knowing their worth. A statement that has been said about that is: "*The works of the earlier scholars were few, but had much blessing, and the works of latter scholars were many, but had little blessing.*" This is not a principle that holds true for all ages and authors; however, in general, it is not far from the truth. The earlier generations, those that lived in the virtuous times, were more firmly grounded in knowledge and had better understanding, due to their closeness to the time of the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, contrary to the latter scholars. That is why you find their speech to be little but with much benefit, as well as their phrases summarized but containing gems and precious insights.

Someone might say that the style of these books is difficult; however, we must examine this claim. As for the books of the pious predecessors and those who follow their guidance, then their books imitate the *Qur'aan* and *Sunnah*, and there is nothing clearer. If there is any difficulty, then it stems from our weakness in language and the limited nature of our understanding. One must have



*Taqwa* (fear of Allaah) to reach the necessary level of understanding. As for books that have been written with exaggerated phrases and guttural styles, then most of them have been written in times of weakness or luxury, so they should be delayed or abandoned. That is why whenever a book is more in tune with the Qur'aan and *Sunnah*, and is frequent in mentioning the texts of revelation as evidence, the easier it is. The closer the book is to the Qur'aan and *Sunnah*, the easier, simpler, and more understandable it is, because Allaah the Exalted Said (what means): *{And We have certainly made the Qur'an easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember?}* [Qur'aan 54:17]

We should not forget that reading the books of the earlier scholars of virtue is very important, because these books were written during the times of the strength, power, supremacy, and dominion of the Muslims. So, the writer would write with the spirit of Islaamic supremacy and with feelings of victory. Their style would be affected by that, and would affect others. This is very different from the styles that many writers write with during times of humiliation and defeat. So, reading the books of the previous scholars builds confidence in this religion in one's soul, because they used to write from a station of strength and supremacy. That is why it is appropriate that one shows caution when reading many books of the latter scholars who have been affected by defeat and humiliation, and it would be clear to you that the author turns away from some Islaamic principles and legislated rulings under the pressure of Western Civilization, for example, as well as defeat in the face of the enemy. Further, they might apologize for some legislated rulings in a despicable way that necessitates abandonment of the religion and submission to the legislation of the Lord of all that exists. They might try to justify the issues of slavery, *Jihaad*, and so forth, with what would be in accordance with the nature of today's world, as they claim. Or, they might say



something that almost nullifies these rulings. That is why it is important to be cautious and be extremely keen when reading books of such new authors.

It is good for the one who wishes to read the books of the previous scholars to choose those who have easy phrases, lucid presentation and an organized way of presenting chapters, such as Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, is in many of his books. One would do so in order to become comfortable with the books of the previous scholars. This is before moving on to books that have some level of hardness, overlapping phrases, and much digression. Some people say that they read books by scholars such as some books by Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, but they do not understand or comprehend much of what he says. This truly happens, and happens for a few reasons, such as if the author has a flowing mind from which his ideas and knowledge gush forth, such as Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, who used to extract his thoughts regarding an issue in a spectacular way, then digress and make the issues and chapters more complex, only to go back to the original topic after many pages, causing inexperienced readers to lose focus and the ability to tie the information together. At this, some sort of confusion and lack of understanding and comprehension would occur. This is something that is done away with in stages, by correctly choosing books, taking it in stages, practice, and getting used to the author's style.

**Removing hard and unknown words should be through using dictionaries and summarized lexicons:** Such as *Mukhtasar As-Sihaah*, which has small publications that are easy to carry around, which mention each word along with its meaning. Further, something more comprehensive is *Al-Mu`jam Al-Waseet*, and for someone who wants a book specifically for unknown or difficult



words that are in Prophetic *Ahaadeeth*, they can use *An-Nihaayah fi Ghareeb Al-Hadeethwa Al-Athar*, to know the meaning. The process will take time in the beginning, and the reader will find it difficult, however, after a while it will become customary, and if they come across hard words, they will not need, usually, to look at its meaning another time. In doing so, their linguistic capability will strengthen in stages and with extensive reading.

**Learn the fundamentals of the Arabic language:** This is an important issue in understanding the material being read. One should know the difference between various aspects in the Arabic language, all of which are important to understanding the meaning. In general, understanding the conjugation of the word is important, and its absence might lead to disastrous mistakes, such as distortion or changing of the meaning. It is also important to precisely conjugate words, as that helps in understanding the various usages of speech, and so forth.

From this, we can know the danger of calling for the use of colloquial language. There is no doubt that it would have a negative effect on understanding the clear Arabic tongue that the Qur'aan and *Sunnah* are in.

Something that helps in this matter is reading books that are verified in a very good, scientific manner, as well as books that are conjugated with all of the markings on the words.

**Reading to Shaykhs or well-versed students of knowledge:** Especially in matters of fundamentals of sciences. There are benefits to this, such as:

- Setting specific and set timings for reading encourages continuity and prevents fatigue.
- It also serves as a protection from misreading and making mistakes in reading.



- It serves as protection from misunderstanding.
- It provides the opportunity to ask someone when one is confused.

This is the meaning of the statement of the one who said: *“Knowledge used to be in the chests of men, then it was transferred to the books, and its keys are in the hands of men.”*

The irregular opinions and strange views that become widespread among people many times are only the result of deprivation of the blessing of reading to the people of knowledge. If you are in area wherein you cannot find a Shaykh or student of knowledge, then the least you can do is read with some of your brothers, because a group is further from error than an individual.

**One should completely avoid describing themselves as “not loving reading” or “hating books” or that they are quick to fall asleep when opening a book:** These types of phrases convince a person that they are indeed as such. This makes the cure harder and more complicated. Rather, a person should make themselves feel that this hardship can be overcome and that it is not going to persist always or remain constant. Also, they should make themselves feel that through practice and struggle, these difficulties will be overcome, that their love of reading is something very plausible, that soon, they will become attached to books and the paths of reading and devotion thereto will become opened for them, and that they have the capability and ability to do so. This method, even if some called it self-suggestion, is tried and beneficial, and is one of the techniques that helps in the cure.

**Borrowing books or sharing one book:** Likewise, one should frequent charity-based and public libraries if they cannot buy books, in order to counter the problem of soaring prices.



**Keenness on reading religious books:** That is because they contain what a person needs in their heart, intellect, and body, as well as that religious knowledge which has an aspect of being based on actions that the Muslim must know, such as the characteristics of worship, dealings, and etiquettes. When a Muslim implements what they read, finds benefit and feels the return and effect, it causes them to increase in reading and perusing. This is contrary to books that contain philosophy and intellectual garbage, and do not contain knowledge or blessed implementation, so, they result in dullness and boredom, and drive people away from reading.

**Following reading with action:** Getting an immediate advantage is what makes a reader feel that they are benefitting from their reading. That is why reading action-based topics such as jurisprudence and following that with action and implementation is one of the important means that one becomes attracted to reading. For example, if you read about *Hajj* then go to *Hajj*, you will feel that you benefitted from your reading. Likewise, if you read a book regarding the description of ablution or prayer and you implement that daily, you will feel the love of reading, because its output is real, visible, and quick. Also, if you were to come across an issue or scenario that you have read about previously, in terms of its ruling, you would feel a certain pleasure.

**Writing important benefits and beautiful gems:** This is something that makes the reader feel as though they are benefitting, and this occurs if they begin gathering whatever grabs their attention and which evokes beautiful reflections in their soul, such as a comprehensive maxim, an emotional story that has an effect, a ruling they were looking for, or an educational aspect or view. After a while, they would have a very valuable collection and a very precious treasure, in terms of these benefits. If they gather and index them, they would be in a notebook, and every time they refer



to it, they would consult them, remember, and taste those delicious fruits. There are many books written by scholars that are mere presentation of benefits that they gained while seeking, researching, and reading, and that they collected and wrote. Also, there are many admonishments that they wrote and authored. The people mention the best things they memorize, and memorize the best things they write. It is possible to write the benefit by writing the title and beginning of the benefit, along with the page number, then making a general index thereafter. Yahya ibn Ma`een, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *“The ruling for the one who seeks knowledge of Hadeeth is that they should never part from their scholar of Hadeeth or their pen. Also, they should not belittle anything they hear; they should write it. So, tie knowledge down with writing.”*

The student of knowledge should be shrewd, because memory is truly treacherous. Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: *“None of the Companions of the Prophet, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, knew more Hadeeth from him than me, except what `Abdullaah ibn `Amr ibn Al-`Aas knew, because he used to write, while I did not.”* The tablet that `Abdullaah ibn `Amr, may Allaah be pleased with him, used to write on was called *As-Saheefah As-Saadiqah* (the Truthful Tablet).

It is also important for the student of knowledge to memorize some of the important phrases, maxims, and summaries and to inform them to others, seeking the Countenance of Allaah the Exalted through benefitting others and making what they have memorized firmer.

**Variety in reading and perusing:** That occurs by changing the book that they are reading, or changing the topic; it is mentioned that Ibn `Abbaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, whenever there would be any boredom in his class would say: *“Bring me the divans of the*



poets.” Also, Muhammad ibn Al-Hasan, may Allaah have mercy on him, used to rarely sleep at night, and would have notebooks besides him. If he would become bored from one topic, he would look and read into another one. He used to place water besides him that he, may Allaah have mercy on him, would use to remove sleepiness.

Further, reading books that have many details and issues, such as books of difference of opinion, would, perhaps, result in hardness of the heart. At that, it would be appropriate to mix that with some heart softening topics.

**Repeating what one reads to make the information stick:** Al-Bukhaari, may Allaah have mercy on him, was asked about the reason behind his memorization, and he said: *“I do not know of anything more beneficial for memory than desire of a man and constant referral and reading.”*

Of the benefits of repeating what one reads is that they benefit new meanings that they did not know before, especially when pondering and reflecting on the Noble Qur’aan, because it has amazing benefits that never cease, and the scholars never become satisfied when reading it. So, whenever the reader reads with reflection and knowledge, they become aware of new meanings.

Repetition of reading books of knowledge makes firm what has previously been memorized, increases new memorization, and opens new fields of understanding. Some have said that if they read a new book or the first time, they feel as though they have acquired a new friend, and when they read it a second time, it is as if they meet an old friend.

**Turning to Allaah the Exalted when one’s understanding is closed off:** Of the things that alienates a reader from books is that whenever they pass over something they do not understand, what





should they do? In the biographies of the people of knowledge, it is mentioned that if their understanding was closed off and they could not understand an issue, or they passed over a hard issue that they found problematic, they would turn to Allaah the Exalted, humble themselves to Him, and ask Him the Exalted to make the matter clear and open what had been closed off. Whenever this would occur to Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, he would call on his Lord and say: *“O Teacher of Ibraaheem, teach me, and O You who allowed Sulaymaan to understand, help me to understand.”* This is because Allaah the Exalted Said (what means): *{And We gave understanding of the case to Solomon}* [Qur’aan 21:79] This calling on Allaah the Exalted is one of the reasons that what had been closed off was opened in a hard issue, word, or phrase in the book.

**Going back to the people of knowledge to ask about problematic matters:** Because Allaah the Exalted Said (what means): *{So ask the people of the message if you do not know.}* [Qur’aan 16:43] Also, the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, said: **“Would they not ask if they do not know? The cure of ignorance is asking.”**

**It might be wise, sometimes, for the reader to pass over what they cannot understand, and go back to it later:** This is so that they do not waste time or feel boredom due to contemplating about something that they did not understand for a long time. They could go back to it or read it in another instance with another type of style, or they could ask and get the meaning clarified. It is not correct to acquit the author always and to insult or accuse the understanding of the reader, because the writer might not have presented the idea in a good manner, or was not given the aid to be clear as necessary, due to their lack of eloquence and ability to express.



**Reading the introductions to scientific books:** Many times, the terms that the author uses in their book are clarified, so, for example, it is not possible for someone who is reading *Taqreeb At-Tahtheeb* by Ibn Hajar, may Allaah have mercy on him, for example to be unaware of what "Second; third, fourth, etc." refer to when mentioning the levels of the narration. Also, one must know the meaning of "acceptable; covered," and so forth in mentioning the levels of the narrators. They cannot come to this knowledge without prior awareness regarding the terms of the book. If they were to read the introduction of the book written by Ibn Hajar, may Allaah have mercy on him, they would come to know of the meaning, and there would be no confusion and obscurity.

Likewise, in some books of the jurisprudential schools, some authors that wrote have specific terminologies that can only be understood through a definition. For example, it might be a letter that is used, or a number, or when they say: 'The five narrated it,' or: 'The six narrated it,' for example. It might also be a part of a word, or a word itself, such as saying that a particular *Hadeeth* is 'Strange.' Also, in books of jurisprudence, some phrases such as: 'They have agreed,' 'The two have agreed,' 'By agreement,' and 'In difference,' and each school of jurisprudence has its own terminologies that are specific to it. Sometimes, the term might be composed of two words, such as when At-Tirmithi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "*Hasan Saheeh*," or: "*Hasan Saheeh Ghareeb*," and when some jurists say: 'The Shaykh said,' 'The explainer said,' 'The judge said,' 'In difference with him,' and: 'In difference of both of them.'

The silence of some scholars about a particular issue in their books might point to a meaning, such as when Abu Daawood, may Allaah have mercy on him, remains silent in his *Sunan*, when Ibn Hajar, may Allaah have mercy on him, remains silent in some



*Ahaadeeth* in *Talkhees Al-Habeer*, and when Ibn Abu Haatim, may Allaah have mercy on him, remains silent regarding some narrators in *Al-Jarhwa At-Ta`deel*.

Some scholars might clarify their terms in the introduction to their books, some during the book, and some at the end of the book. Some terms used by scholars are only known through constant reading and investigation. There are some books that clarify the terms used by authors in their books.

**One should be keen on noticing mistyping, distortion, and printing errors:** All of this confuses the understanding and changes the meaning. It is the result of the copier distorting some things, of the printing press making an error, or of the heedlessness of the reader. There have been many meanings that are mistaken, as well as much confusion and blindness, and what follows will be some examples of mistyping and distortion regarding which, some scholars have wrote specific books in order to unveil them.

A man came to Al-Layth ibn Sa`d, may Allaah have mercy on him, and said: *"What did Naafi` report to you regarding the Prophet, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, and the one whose father had a story spread about him?"* Al-Layth, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"Woe to you, it is regarding the one who drinks out of utensils made of silver is swallowing Hellfire into their stomach."* So, because of the spelling in Arabic, all the words were distorted into meaning something else!

Abu Al-`Aynaa', may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"I attended the lesson of some heedless scholars of Hadeeth, and they gave the narration from Allaah the Exalted. He said: 'Allaah's Messenger, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, reported from Jibreel, who reported from Allaah, who reported from a man.' I said: 'Who is this person that is fit to be the teacher of Allaah the Exalted? They then searched and found that in his paper, it was written, 'the Exalted.'"*



So, because of the distortion, the words were changed to give the wrong meaning.

One of the reasons behind mistakes in the past was the absence of dots on the Arabic letters, and lack of precision of words with conjugation. When they put the dots on the letters and placed conjugation, these errors decreased. Examples of what is present in some chains of narration and texts in terms of mistyping is when they change Shu`bah to Sab`ah (because they are spelled the same), news (*Khabar*) to bread (*Khubz*), Kharzah to Jazrah, Jareer to Khurbuz, and `Anazah to `Anzah. In a narration, it is mentioned that the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, placed `Anazah before him in prayer. Muhammad ibn Al-Muthanna Al-`Anazi said: *"We are an honorable people, we are from `Anazah, and the Prophet, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, prayed in our direction!"* The true meaning of `Anazah is a spear or a short staff that the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, used to place before him while praying in travel. There are also mistakes in recitation of the Qur'aan that change the meaning, and that render the meaning to be distasteful and reprehensible. There are also many other examples of mistyping and distortion. The intent is that one must be precise and cautious especially in books that have no accuracy checks, verification, or revision done to them.

**One should correct the strange and irregular meanings that come to one's mind as a result of ignorance and lack of knowledge of the intent of the phrase:** This is a matter that requires caution and attention. One must quickly research and ask when such matter happens. Let us give some examples, to show what the intent is:

What can some people understand from when the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, said: **"Whoever believes in Allaah the Exalted and the Last Day should not give their water to another person's vegetation."** It is true naivete to understand from



this *Hadeeth*, for example, that the farmer must prevent water from passing to the land of their neighbor! This is a false meaning that the legislation does not condone, since among its principles is that one should show good conduct and be a good neighbor, and that one should not cause harm to anything. When going back to the explanations of the scholars, we find that the intent of the *Hadeeth* is that one should not have intercourse with a pregnant woman who was impregnated by another man, and that the one who purchased a slave-girl, for example, must be acquitted from her womb through menstruation before having intercourse with her. This is a necessary process to preserve lineage from being mixed.

Another example is what some people understand from the *Hadeeth* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, when he said: **“Allaah does not accept the prayer of a menstruating woman unless she wears covering.”** Whatever we say the different interpretations are, there is no doubt that Allaah the Exalted does not accept the prayer of the menstruating woman with or without a covering. If the reader goes back to the explanation of the *Hadeeth*, the confusion will be cleared in knowing that the intent behind the menstruating woman here is the woman that has reached the age of menstruation and is not responsible.

Some beginners would be in confusion and uncertainty when reading some books of jurisprudence, for example, the phrase: ‘The blood money ( *`AqI*) is due on the relatives from the father’s side.’ One of the reasons they would be in confusion is that they would not know the meaning of the word *`AqI* here, and would think that it refers to intellect. Likewise, the word *Islaam* is used at times to refer to a type of sale. When a person is aware of this, they do not become confused when such word is used, such as: ‘*Islaam* is permissible in such-and-such situation,’ and so on.



**Overcoming absence of mind and lack of concentration:** This is a problem that results in alienating people from reading, and gives them the feeling that they do not benefit anything. You might notice yourself that you complete a page without understanding anything, and that is because the eye works in a systematic and programmed manner, while the heart is inattentive and heedless. Due to the importance of this problem, we must speak about it with some details.



## Types of distractedness

There are two types of distractedness and absentmindedness: that of the vision and that of the thought. Distractedness of the heart or thought happens when the eyes continue reading, but the heart is busy with thinking of something else; so, the body is in one valley, and the heart and mind are in another. As for distractedness of the eyes, it happens when the eyes become busied with watching something, someone, or some image. Most of the time, the heart follows the eyes, and when the eyes are busied, that prevents one from concentrating. Likewise, when the heart is becomes busied, it prevents one from understanding and comprehending. No doubt, the reader must rid themselves of these two types of distractedness in order to benefit from their reading. The eye sees the writing of the words and letters, but the heart is what comprehends the meaning.

Distractedness is a general problem that happens to all people. However, they vary in how they are able to overcome it. Some have long periods of distractedness and others have short ones. Others go through one thought or two, and others go through many thoughts and they plunge into their mind. There is no means more useful and effective in facing and preventing these incidental thoughts than struggling and putting effort.

### Other cures for distractedness:

#### First: Interaction with the reading material:

This is one of the main means that lead to concentration. The Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, used to recite at night, and when he, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, would pass over a verse of glorification, he would glorify Allaah the Exalted, if he passed over a verse that mentions punishment, he, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, would seek refuge, and if he passed over a verse mentioning



bliss, he, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, would ask for it. Once, he read the verse wherein Allaah the Exalted Said (what means): **{Is not that [Creator] Able to give life to the dead?}** [Qur'aan 75:40] and said: **"Transcendent are You; of course!"** Likewise, if he, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, passed over a verse mentioning prostration, he would prostrate. This is all interaction with what is being read. It should be known that interaction can only occur through reflection on what one is reading.

Some signs of interaction with the text being read might become apparent in the features of some people while reading. So, you find that sometimes, they frown, become happy, smile, or might appear surprised or amazed. You might be sitting in a room with someone who is reading in serenity, and suddenly, you hear them chuckle, as if they read something funny, and due to their concentration, they became affected and laughed.

Concentration does not occur easily in the beginning, and no doubt, one must attain it through constant practice, patience, and resisting exterior influences. If the reader can struggle to turn their mind back to what they are reading time and time again, then these incidental thoughts will not continue to come back from wherever they came from. Through repetition of that, concentration of the mind becomes something ordinarily and possible. This is simply a matter of patience and struggle.

### Second: Raising the voice:

There are three types of readers:

- Audible readers that can only read with raising their voice.
- A mechanical reader that moves their lips when reading, without any sound.





- A visual reader that does not speak or move their lips, but rather, looks at and thinks about what they are reading.

Some experienced individuals say that the third type of reader is the best of them, because they have intense concentration and do not need anything to make them concentrate again. However, in reality, the people vary in this, and everyone has their own method that they are comfortable with, just as the nature of the thing being read vary.

It is possible for the one who is easily distracted while reading to try raising the voice when reading, and this has some unique qualities, such as:

- **It is more stable:** Some people of knowledge said that it is appropriate for the reader to raise their voice when reading their lesson, so that they can hear themselves, because if the ears hear it, it becomes lodged in the heart. That is why a person gains more understanding when they hear it along with read it.
- **It is more eloquent:** If the thing being read is something that opens the path of eloquence that increases in the eloquence of the reader. Examples are reading good poetry, literary pieces, and rhetorical styles. This improves the quality of pronunciation and beauty in expression. Some people of knowledge said: *"It has been told me regarding some Shaykh that he said: 'I saw in one of the towns of Nabatene a young boy who speaks eloquently and expresses himself well. I asked him regarding his eloquence, despite the dialect of his own people, and he said: 'I used to undertake reading fifty pages from the book of Al-Jaahith and would raise my voice when reading,*



*and it was only a short time that passed until I was as you see now.”*

- **It is more likely to keep a person away from sleep:** Abu Haamid, may Allaah have mercy on him, used to say to his companions: *“If you study, then raise your voices, because it helps make what you memorize firmer and keeps you away from sleep better.”*

### Third: Using the pen when reading:

This is an important and beneficial advice. The notes a person has written on a book shows their concentration and interaction with reading, as using the pen when reading attracts one’s attention. Expressing one’s thoughts about what is being read shows their understanding. If you read and find that you fill your page with beneficial writing, then know that you are successful in understanding and tying sentences and ideas.

Writing can be done in the margins, whether in the upper, side, or bottom margins. However, this should be in the book that belongs to the person, not in the books of others, and not in public books. The notes should be as if they are a conversation between the reader and the author and they should be beneficial, not as we see, unfortunately, in some books, especially books belonging to public libraries, that you find that they are filled with drawings and various doodles; this is heedless play that shows absurdity and is a type of trespassing on the part of the one who did it.

### Some of the beneficial ways of utilizing the pen when reading are:

- Underlining to signify main points and important ideas.



- Placing vertical lines in the margin to show the importance of the idea or that it has already been mentioned.

**Ideas of some students in dealing with voluminous study books are:**

- Using various colors, such as yellow for important things, such as laws that must be memorized, and another color for something that is less important, and so forth. They can also use a numbering system, such as 1 for very important, 2 for important, and 3 for ordinary. This helps in knowledge priorities in studying if the time is short or if they wish to begin or focus on a particular aspect. This is not a new idea, for scholars have used different colors in their books previously. It is transmitted that Al-Haafith Ibn Hajar, may Allaah have mercy on him, said regarding the stages of writing his great book, *Al-Isaabah fi Tamyeez As-Sahaabah*: *"I wrote with red first, then yellow, then in something else that does not mix with it. All of this was before writing the chapter of ambiguous men and women."*
- Numbering the various points, so that they can be accurately remembered and memorized, by placing numbers for the most important points that the author mentions. This enables the reader to concentrate better.
- Referring to page numbers that mention matters pertaining to the matter at hand, such as saying, for example: 'Refer to such-and-such page,' or: 'This issue has been spoken about on such-and-



such page.’ This shows comprehension and helps tie between two points.

- Signifying an ambiguous point so that one can ask about it in the future, or writing questions that come to one’s mind while reading any particular matter, so that they can research them. If one comes to meet some people of knowledge in the future, the student of knowledge would have some questions that are prepared that they can ask about.

- Putting emphasis and summarizing an idea or passage in the margin. We find that some versions of some books that the verifier or author places many side titles, and many books of earlier scholars are comprised of chapters, and the author would mention many pieces of information in various subjects. That was due to their memory and how easily ideas flowed from their minds. So, the reader must categorize points in order to render understanding and comprehension easy, and placing side titles helps this aspect. This also enables the reader to be in a state of constantly following up and gathering what they read. Further, placing these titles helps a reader unveil the main idea of the passage or paragraph. In many books, these titles can be placed while reading, such as writing: ‘The linguistic definition,’ in its due place, ‘Terminological definition,’ in its due place, mentioning statements of the scholars, the preferred view, a confusing matter, along with its response, doubts with their answers, the summary, and so forth.



- Try to derive what the author is trying to get at or try to think of the possibilities that they will mention. For example, the student of knowledge, while reading the title of a jurisprudential matter in a book of differing, can try to reach the statements of the scholars before reading them. These attempts will develop the ability of deriving and reflecting regarding the possible views. This helps in building jurisprudential mastery. Likewise, this thinking will help the reader concentrate within the text, and distance him from distractedness.
- Enriching the book through beneficial comments and additions, such as transmitting the authenticity of some *Ahaadeeth* present in the book through the books of authentication of *Ahaadeeth*, or adding other pieces of information from another source, such as when the author mentions some ways of reconciliation between two *Hadeeths* that apparently are contradictory, at that, the reader would mention other ways of reconciliation that they have read before, or they quote from another source. Likewise, if one reads a phrase that says: 'In this issue, there are other views,' they would undertake quoting some of these views from their resources or from their memory in the margin of the book they are reading. Likewise, they can track the author in their blunders, or critique an author in some of their ideas, by saying: 'The author blundered here, and the truth is such-and-such,' and mention what the scholars have mentioned, and so forth.



Do not pass over correcting printing errors, and they are frequently present in the editions of those who deal in books that do not fear Allaah the Exalted. Likewise, they are present in the books of those who act in conflict with the *Hadeeth* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, who said: **“Allaah loves that when one of you does an action, that they perfect it.”** This action needs precision and knowledge.

Al-Muzani, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *“I read Ar-Risaalah to Imaam Ash-Shaafi`i eighty times, and every time, he would come across a mistake. He said: ‘Stop; Allaah the Exalted has refused that any book be completely authentic and true except His Book.’”*

The reader should be humble towards people of knowledge, and should not be hasty in declaring them wrong or correcting them based on their own personal opinion without remnants of knowledge. What are we compared to one of the major scholars, as in, Abu `Amr ibn Al-`Alaa’, who humbly said to the people of knowledge that preceded him: *“We are nothing compared to our predecessors, except a seed in the base of very tall trees.”*

So, one must not be hasty, but rather, should correct things they are sure of, because the reader, sometimes, thinks that something that is not a mistake is a mistake. So, they would correct what is in the book, but their correction is an inherent mistake, and whatever is in the book is true. Patience is from Allaah the Exalted and hastiness is from Satan.

When correcting, it is good to use a thin pen such as a pencil, for example, so that it can easily be erased if the reader comes to know of the mistake in their correction. The correction should be above the word or in the side margin, while pointing to the area of correction with a line or arrow. Correcting mistakes in the book



increases the worth of the book to its owner, and makes it their precious copy, causing them to be attached to it more.

Evaluating the book on its cover after reading it by writing some notes would be a general evaluation while mentioning some points against it, regarding what it contains or its style. The educator and caller to Islaam that teaches people is keen on knowing, through this evaluation, who this book can be given to and who is it appropriate for to read.

Summarizing the contents of the book is something beneficial in the previously mentioned evaluation process. It reminds the reader of the contents of the book if they need to go back to it in the future. They can just read the summary and remember many details. Summaries are an art that not everyone is good at, for one must have extensive comprehension skills and understanding of the contents of the book first, then one would judge how big the summary should be, and freeing oneself of the terms of the author to shape your own terms, unless the terms of the author are important and give the needed summary.

Many times, some students are mistaken in what they think of the correct method of summarizing. So, they bring results that are laughable; you find them taking two lines from the introduction, a few lines from here and there, and they do not care of how the terms tie with one another, and how the speech is tied together, then just copy the ending of the author, and that is it.

### Reaching adequate speed when reading:

Adequate speed in reading depends on the type of material being read as well as the goal behind reading that material. Reading newspapers about news stories can be done in a fast manner, faster than when reading deep scientific matters, such as *Usool Al-Fiqh*, for example. Further, the goal behind reading also affects the speed.



If one intends to understand the text, they must go relatively slow, and if they intend to review memorization or to read fast, then they increase the speed, to the point that it reaches 600 words per minute. If the intent is skimming in order to gain a general understanding about the book that one is unable to read at that time, then the reader can read the first sentence of every paragraph, or some parts from the middle of each page. This is the case of someone looking for the place of a piece of information that they read before. Or, they can resort to reading swiftly through the book, in order to decide if they wish to buy it or not. They might have to increase speed if they wished to know the general idea of the book. In that situation, they would read the title names and the index, and would choose random pages to read and pass over others through quick perusing.

An example of surveying when reading is what happened to Imaam Ash-Shaafi`i, may Allaah have mercy on him, when he was asked regarding evidence for an issue of consensus and he surveyed the Qur'aan three times every night until he was guided to where the evidence was.

If you wish to know if your speed is appropriate or not, then read quietly for five minutes, then count the words and divide them by five, and if the result is 150 or less, then you read slow, and you must strive to increase your reading speed. What follows are some advices from some people with experience in this:

- Read five minutes a day, for example, for a month, as fast as you are able, and leave off being preoccupied with the meaning, for now.
- Expanding the scope of vision when reading, by lessening the time that one stops on a single word.





- Reading should be done silently, without moving of the lips or raising of the voice, without going back to an ambiguous word, or repeating it, because its meaning will usually become clear through context.

If you follow the previous steps, you will notice an improvement in the speed of your reading. As for speed in reading in the biographies of the scholars, then it is something amazing. What follows are some encouraging examples:

Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdaadi, may Allaah have mercy on him, heard *Saheeh Al-Bukhaari* from Ismaa`eel ibn Ahmad Al-Hayri, may Allaah have mercy on him, in Makkah in three sittings, two of which were in two nights. He used to begin reading at the time of *Maghrib* and conclude at *Fajr* prayer. The third day consisted from after sunrise until *Fajr* the next day. Ath-Thahabi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "I do not know of anyone in our times able to do this." Perhaps one of the reasons he was able was that time was blessed during those times. It is also narrated that Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdaadi, may Allaah have mercy on him, read *Saheeh Al-Bukhaari* to Kareemah Al-Marwaziyyah, may Allaah have mercy on her, during the days of Mina.

Ibn Hajar, may Allaah have mercy on him, read *As-Sunan* by Ibn Maajah, may Allaah have mercy on him, in four sittings, and read *Saheeh Muslim* in four sittings, apart from the concluding sitting, and that occurred in about two days, for he used to sit from early morning until *Thuhr*. He read *Al-Kabeer* by An-Nasaa'i in ten sittings, and each sitting was about four hours. The fastest timing that he read a book in is that he read *Mu`jam At-Tabaraani As-Sagheer* in one sitting, between *Thuhr* and `Asr. This is a one volume work that comprises of approximately 1,500 *Hadeeth*. He reported *Al-Bukhaari* in ten sittings, each of which was four hours



long. Ibn Hajar, may Allaah have mercy on him, in his stay in Damascus, which was for about two months and two thirds of a month, read close to a hundred volumes.

We know for sure that we are unable to do such a thing, for our times are not like theirs in blessings, and our resolve is not like theirs in how high it is. However, the point behind mentioning these stories is to kindle a fire of encouragement in the souls so that they show more keenness in reading, patience, and steadfastness. We should also note that the point is that one understands and comprehends, not that they complete many pages and read entire volumes. There are many that face problems of lack of understanding because of how fast they read.

### **Being comfortable when reading:**

This is what helps in continuity and concentration, and what follows are some advices in this matter:

- Make sure that the light is sufficient, because dim lights tire the eye out.
- The light should be placed in a manner that does not give off any shade on the book or reflect off the book, thereby harming the eyes.
- It would be good for the light to be placed so that the light falls on it equally.
- The best position for reading, as mentioned by people of experience, is that the back should be straight and upright, the book should be in the middle of the body, and at a 45 degree angle. The head should lean forward a little bit, so that the eyes look directly at the book, and there should be approximately 30 cm between the eye and the book.



What has preceded does not mean that a person should only read in this manner, because it might not always be an option. Our scholars used to read in the light of the moon, a candle, or a lamp. They used to read while sitting, standing, walking, and reclining. Some scholars of *Hadeeth* in our times used to read while standing on a ladder. The point here is to show the ideal state that a person to be in to continue reading for the longest possible time, since if some people sit in a bad manner, their leg, neck, or eyes hurt them, and they abandon reading. So, knowing a comfortable way of sitting is one of the ways to avoid that.

- It is also beneficial for the person to take rest whenever they feel tired, even if for a few minutes, so that they can go back to reading once again.
- When feeling weakness in eyesight or pains when reading, one must see a doctor, if that is possible. The issue might need one to use eyeglasses.

### Choosing ideal times for reading:

Reading after exhaustion of one's mind or body has little benefits and effect. Reading after relaxation is more beneficial and has a deeper effect. That is why the time directly after waking from sleep is the best of times, and there is no doubt that reading after sleeping and relaxation is better than when one is sleepy. That is how the system of studies has been formulated. Reading in the early hours is better and has blessing, because the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, said: **"O Allaah, bless the early times for my Nation."**

However, this preference does not prevent one from reading during other times, if they are able, especially for the student of knowledge who is zealous. Likewise, most people today cannot read other than at the end of the day before sleeping, after completing their work and dealing with the needs of the household. So, one of them does



not have a change present itself until after the children sleep and the house is calm. This is the situation of most employees, so they must do that, and must increase their reading during break times. Specifying a time for reading in the day, adhering to it, and keenness on not losing it is one of the great wishes and aspirations that one must try to accomplish.

### **Choosing an appropriate place for reading:**

The reader should be in a quiet place that has good ventilation, and is far from bustle and disturbing sounds, as well as far from distracting images, such as pictures, bright colors, moving images, and strong odors, such as the smell of cooking. If you look at how public libraries are designed, you would find that the sitting areas are surrounded by partitions from in front, to the right, and to the left, so that the reader's vision is restricted to their book, and their mind does not disperse or their attention scatter.

One must also point to the fact that the lack of having these opportune areas of reading, such as being in a packed house, does not prevent one from struggling against themselves in concentration or going to an appropriate place.

### **Preventing things that busy or distract a person:**

The reader must not respond to anyone cutting them off, or respond to anything that is distracting or busies them when reading, such as answering the phone whenever it rings, answering the door of everyone who knows, answering any call to do any work, except if they truly must, such as answering one's parents, or if they are called to do praiseworthy actions which is more beneficial than continuation in reading. However, one must quickly go back to their book when the emergency is over, so that their resolve does not slacken and so that their determination does not end.



One must not mix reading with listening to other sounds, because the heart is one, and it is hard for the person to combine two matters in their concentration. Discard what the disbelieving Westerners say, as in that calm music helps one read! Those poor students who are tried and tested by those Westerners sit and try to revise while listening to music, so, they join two evil things, as in, they earn sins, and lose concentration.

After these cures and words of advice encouraging reading, and clarifying how to benefit from it, there is no harm in moving onto some general advice dealing with how to preserve books in one's possession:



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## Preservation of books

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The reader must preserve and care for their books, regardless if it is their possession or that of someone else. They should do so in order to make sure the book has lasting benefit. A book that is preserved and is in mint condition makes one delighted to read from it. Our scholars used to be keen on caring for their books, for one of them said: *“Do not make your book into a trumpet or a box,”* meaning, do not continuously twist it, making it look like a trumpet, and do not place things on it, making it like a box or a chest; both these acts hasten the damage of the book. The keenness of the people of knowledge reached a point wherein they even mentioned how to place the book when reading, and one of them said when advising that books be cared for: *“It should not be spread open, so that its binding does not break quickly, and it should not be placed directly on the floor, but rather, on a piece of wood, so that it does not become damp. If placed on a piece of wood, place some leather above and below the wood, or, between the book and the floor, there should be some leather.”*

In order to keep the book in good condition, one should avoid the conditions that make the book susceptible to damage or tearing, such as:

- Placing the book upside down or leaving it open for long periods of time.
- Opening the book too vigorously, rubbing the book with one's hand, or wetting the fingers too much with saliva before changing the page.
- Placing the books on top of each other; they should actually be beside each other.



- Placing large books on top of small books; this leads to it falling and their covers coming off.
- Placing the book in a leaning way in the bookshelf; it should be placed in an upright position.
- Turning the pages over roughly, quickly, or angrily. One should not resort to violence or haphazardness in opening pages that are stuck together as a result of a mistake in cutting in printing. Rather, one should use a knife or an opener specifically designed for this purpose. The stuck pages should be opened at once, so that the reader does not need to repeatedly stop reading.
- Letting the books rub against a solid or hard surface when moving them, such as wood or edges of metal.
- Using the book as a pillow, fan, compressor, support, something to recline on, bug killer, or table for food or drinks. One of the wise men saw a man sitting on a book, and he said: *"Glorified is Allaah! He protects his clothes, but not his book; protecting the book is preferred over protecting the clothes."* One should protect the book from anything that falls on it, in terms of food or drinks, especially during travel, trips, and reading at the dinner table.
- Folding the edge or margin of the book so that it is known that this is the place they stopped, for example. Instead of this, one should place a marking that can be removed. The scholars used to write: *"Reached here,"* to show the place they reached. One can place something soft that can show where they stopped, such as a paper or thread, and should avoid using wood or anything coarse.



- Writing with rough pens, writing strongly on the paper, or writing with a pen that has a sharp point, especially when correcting within the book, leads to tearing the pages of the book. It is unfortunate to see what some people do to disfigure the look of the book from inside and outside, by adding large scribbles and various drawings while reading.
- Negligence in using pens that have wet ink when writing on the book. One should avoid using materials that leave dirt or marks on the hand, such as ink, because it transfers from the hand of the one using those pens to the book when the book is held and rested on.
- Negligence of pages that have been torn in a haphazard fashion, and delaying mending it and fixing it with tape. If it is not fixable, one can copy it and stick the copy where the original was.
- Twisting the book like a trumpet when holding it, or turning the book into a box wherein one places pens, erasers, and so forth.
- Throwing the book or tossing it from a height; rather, one must place it by hand, so that it does not get torn. This is a mistake that many students and teachers fall into, especially when passing books and notebooks of students around.
- Placing the book or stacking them on the floor, directly, because that leaves it vulnerable to damage by termites, moisture, mold, or other damaging elements. It is better to place it on a wooden stand, or an insulated surface (that has no moisture). Or, one should place them on bookshelves or closets that are clear. If you





discover termites damaging them, immediately take them out, and use insecticides to treat the problem.

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### *Advice regarding acquiring and purchasing books*

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Numerous factors lead a person to buy a book, including the status of the book, the author's fame, attractiveness of the title, advice of others, desire to research, need of the book, desire to form a library of a student of knowledge, the look of the book, the quality of its paper, and the beauty of its print, the inexpensiveness of the book, and so forth.

The Muslim reader, and especially, the student of knowledge, must be keen on acquiring the books that they need if they are able, either through purchase, rent, or borrowing. Here is some advice regarding acquiring books:

- Knowing good books, and that occurs through acquiring lists of good books from people of knowledge, and asking experienced people and those with insight and ability to differentiate, and seeking their counsel before purchasing.
- Prior preparation before buying and acquiring a book, such as:
  - Making a list of books you wish to purchase now, and books you wish to purchase in the future.
  - Keeping in mind the monetary capabilities that help one realize the urge and desire, and determining priorities during times of decreased finances.
  - Specifying the bookstores you wish to go to.



- Taking the opportunities of book fairs and sales that some bookstores have.
- Be keen on purchasing and acquiring books that deal with Qur'aan and *Hadeeth*, in specific, such as exegesis and explanations of each, and books pertaining to sciences of the religion, in general.
- Be keen on buying books of fundamentals and the books of the pious predecessors that one cannot suffice without. Do not fill your library or confuse your thoughts with useless books, especially those of the people of innovation, because they are deadly poisons. You must purchase books that rely on authentic evidence, that are weaved with the understanding of the pious predecessors, and that clarify the reasoning behind rulings. Of the most important books to build the library of the student of knowledge are the famous books of *Hadeeth* and the compendiums of *Sunnah*, such as Bukhaari, Muslim, Ibn Maajah, At-Tirmithi, An-Nasaa'i, and Abu Daawood, as well as *Musnad Ahmad*, and the books of the two Shaykhs: Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, and his student, Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, as well as other books, such as:
  - The books of Al-Haafith Ibn `Abd Al-Barr, may Allaah have mercy on him, the greatest of which is *At-Tamheed*.
  - The books of Ibn Qudaamah, may Allaah have mercy on him, the greatest of which is *Al-Mughni*.



- The books of Ath-Thahabi, may Allaah have mercy on him, such as *As-Siyar* and *Taareekh Al-Iszaam*.
- The books of IbnKatheer, may Allaah have mercy on him, such as his exegesis and *Al-Bidaayahwa An-Nihaayah*.
- The books of Ibn Rajab, mayAllaah have mercy on him, such as *Jaami` Al-`Uloomwa Al-Hikam* and *Lataa'if Al-Ma`arif*.
- The books of other scholars, such as Ibn Hajar, may Allaah have mercy on him, Ash-Shawkaani, may Allaah have mercy on him, Muhammad ibn `Abd Al-Wahhaab, may Allaah have mercy on him, As-San`aani, may Allaah have mercy on him, Muhammad Al-Ameen Ash-Shinqeeti, may Allaah have mercy on him, and other sincere, hardworking past and present scholars of this *Ummah*.
- Be keen on purchasing books that have been verified that the text has been precisely determined and that are keen on clarifying the authenticity of the *Ahaadeeth*, in terms of authentic or weak, such as the books of Ahmad Shaakir, may Allaah have mercy on him, Al-Albaani, may Allaah have mercy on him, as well as collegiate theses that served many books of knowledge.
- Acquire books of jurisprudence and verdicts that teach the Muslim the rulings of worship.
- Be keen on acquiring books of those that are known to be virtuous and regarding whom facts testify in terms of their progress in the religion of Allaah the Exalted.



Such people are the furthest away from cheating people, earning reputation, and wealth.

- When purchasing books of unknown authors, it is good to choose some paragraphs from the book to read before buying it, in order to be sure of the quality of the contents, so that the buyer does not become deceived by the attractive colors and lofty prints.
- Choose books that have good and strong binding, and make sure that the cover holds together.
- Make sure the book is free of any dirt or printing mistakes, such as the pages being folded or upside down. Also, be aware some parts being erased, deficient, or some sections being out of order or backwards.
- Read the index of the book before buying it, in order to rate it and to know the importance of what it consists of, in terms of topics, as well as to unveil some of the contents that the titles in the index refer to.
- When purchasing books, you must choose versions that are clean and have clear letters, because if the letter is too small, it hurts the eyes when reading. Some said: *“Do not write with small letters, lest you become regretful and insulted by others.”* If you keep the book, then when you become old and your eyesight weakens, you will regret it. Then, if you pass it on to those after you, and it tires them out, you will have made yourself susceptible to being censured.
- Be keen on purchasing books that have good punctuation. Also, be keen on acquiring books that have a good sectioning system and good branching system, or images that clarify and help in understanding the idea.



- If you buy a book that has an index showing printing errors, hasten to place the corrections, if one is able, in their due places. If you do not do so, you might read the book with its mistakes and forget to go to the index of corrections.
- If you purchase a book, then hasten to add it to your index of books in your library.



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## Advice regarding forming and organizing your personal library

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- Choose a calm and clean place that is far from the reach of children.
- Be keen on ensuring completeness and comprehensiveness in the subjects of the books, in order to cover the various branches, such as exegesis, *Hadeeth*, jurisprudence, creed, biography of the Prophet, *sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, and history, character, manners, heart softeners, principles of jurisprudence, science of *Hadeeth*, narrators and biographies, syntax and morphology, language and poetry, proselytization and education, the woman and family, the conditions of the Muslims and modern groups, books of general culture, and so forth.
- Be keen on acquiring the oldest editions and the most important books in every science.
- One should arrange the books in such a manner that the highest level should be saved for the noblest level, and so on in having the next in stages. So, it should be arranged in the following order: Qur'aan, then *Hadeeth*, then explanations of *Hadeeth*, then creed, then principles of jurisprudence, then jurisprudence, then syntax, then poetry of Arabs. If two books are of the same level in the same genre, one should place the book that has more Qur'aan and *Hadeeth* higher. If they are equal, then they should rate it based on the status of the author. If they are equal, then they should rate it based on the older book. If they are equal, then it should be the



book that is more used by the righteous and scholars. If they are equal, then the most authentic of the two, and so forth.

- If you acquire a book, do not place it in your library until you have skimmed it quickly, or read the introduction or index, or read an instance in it. Then, you should place it with similar books of knowledge. If you do not do so, perhaps ages will pass without reading it. Thus, it is advisable to save a section in your library that is purely for new books that have not been read.
- Write subject titles on your bookshelves, so that it is easier to place the book in its appropriate place.
- Make an indexing system for the library based on subject, title, or author, along with a numbering system, in order to make it easier to search in it and find what is needed. This is in addition to maintaining correct order and constant revision of the places of the books that are placed in the library, even if quickly.
- Keep multiple copies of good books so that you can give them out as gifts.
- Make a notebook for borrowing, in order to write the names of the books that have been borrowed and the names of those whom the books were borrowed from.



## The etiquette of borrowing books

It is recommended to borrow books. Wakee`, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"The first blessing of Hadeeth is borrowing books."* However, there is an etiquette even for borrowing, such as:

- Thanking the one who you borrowed from, and asking Allaah the Exalted to grant him goodness. One should also not keep the book more than they need, and should not hold it back if the owner asks for it, or if they do not need it. There is no doubt that one of the reasons of weakness of borrowing books among people is that they do not return the books to their owners, or are late without any excuse or reason.
- The one borrowing must hasten to return the book to its owner. There are some quotes regarding this, such as:
  - Yoonus ibn Zayd, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"Az-Zuhri said to me: 'Yoonus, beware of taking books illegally.' I said: 'What does that mean?' He said: 'Holding them back from their owners.'"*
  - Al-Khateeb, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"Due to people withholding books, more than one person has refused to give books to borrow."*
  - Sufyaan, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"Do not allow anyone to borrow your book."*
  - Ar-Rabi` ibn Sulaymaan, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"Al-Buwayti wrote to me, saying: 'Preserve your book, because if you lose a book, you will not find blessing.'"*





- The middle opinion in the issue of lending books is that you lend to a person that will preserve the book and return it on time.
- Some said: *“Do not lend your book unless you know that the one you lend to is of knowledge and religion.”*
- Some, when asked to borrow a book, would say: *“Show me your books,”* and if they find them preserved and cherished, they would lend it to them, but if they found them dusty or changed in figure, they would refrain.
- One may not fix a book without the permission of its owner, and may not write anything in the empty spaces of the beginning and ending unless they knew the owner would not mind or they took permission for that. They should not let anyone else borrow it without the owner’s permission, and they should protect it from water, dirt, and misuse.
- The one borrowing must inspect the book before taking it and after giving it back to make sure that it is in good condition.



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## *Conclusion*

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The summary of all that has preceded is that reading comprises two matters:

- Patience and struggle so that the Muslim becomes an excellent and persistent reader.
- Sincerity, so that they can benefit from what they read, and knowledge become stationed in their heart, and so that they earn reward for their action.

We ask Allaah the Exalted to grant us beneficial knowledge, keenness in acquiring it, benefit us in what we read, and an increase in knowledge. He the Exalted is the Best to ask from and the Most Generous to place one's hopes.