



Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary: How to Improve over the Long-Term

The world is saturated with both excellent and interesting writing. The trick is to find sources you enjoy and read 20 minutes a day. Committing to reading just 20 minutes a day allows the average reader to read nearly 30 books a year. How does that work? The average reader reads 300 words per minute. Translated to a whole year, that same reader can read 2,184,000 words! The average book has 75,000 words, resulting in around 29 books per year. You could conceivably fit this in while eating your breakfast every day! (Or look at Instagram or SnapChat just a tiny bit less often – just saying.)

Following is a list of periodicals that appeal to students. Try to pick a new one each week to explore different perspectives and topics.

- The New York Times – Generally regarded as the flagship newspaper of the United States. Its crossword is legendary. (www.nytimes.com)
- The Nation – Liberal magazine focused on politics and the economy (www.thenation.com)
- National Review – Conservative magazine focused on politics and the economy (www.nationalreview.com)
- BBC News – UK-based news organization with a non-U.S. view of news and current events. Sign up for the “6 Things You Must Read This Week” email for 6 editor-selected interesting articles. (www.bbc.com)
- The Atlantic – Focuses on foreign affairs, politics, the economy, and cultural trends (www.theatlantic.com)
- Scientific American – Focused on science. Oldest continuously published magazine in the U.S. (www.scientificamerican.com)
- Slate – Covers arts and culture, politics, sports, and news (www.slate.com)
- The Economist – UK-based magazine offering insight on international news and politics, business and finance, science and technology, and the connections between them. (www.economist.com)
- The New Yorker – Unabashedly New York City-based magazine focused on pop culture, politics, and social issues. Includes excellent (and interesting!) short fiction from top writers. Famous for its single panel cartoons. www.newyorker.com
- ProPublica – Non-profit, independent newsroom. (www.propublica.org)
- Edge – Conversation-based essays on intellectual topics. Be sure to check out this year’s Annual Question and previous years’. (www.edge.org)

- Smithsonian – Official journal published by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. focused on science with excellent accompanying photography. (www.smithsonianmag.com)
- National Geographic – Focused on scientific topics and how they relate to humanity. Read the hard-copy magazine as limited content is online. World renowned photography. (www.nationalgeographic.com)
- New Scientist – UK-based magazine focused on science in all its forms. (www.newscientist.com)
- Science – Peer-reviewed academic journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Investigate in particular the “News” tab and the “Curated Topics” section under “Topics.” (www.sciencemag.org)
- Science News – Devoted to short articles about new scientific and technical developments. (www.sciencenews.org)
- Arts and Letters Daily – Diverse array of news stories, essays, and features from across the humanities. Articles are chosen for their appeal and humor. Site owned by The Chronicle of Higher Education. (www.aldaily.com)
- 3 Quarks Daily – Commentary, essays, and multimedia from “anything they deem inherently fascinating,” including literature, the arts, politics, current affairs, science, philosophy, gossip. (www.3quarksdaily.com)
- National Public Radio – Online print version of news outlet. Focused on news and cultural programming. (www.npr.org)
- Wikipedia – Not high level writing but interesting to go to the main page and/or choose “Random Article” from the sidebar. Might spur your interest in topics for further reading. (www.wikipedia.org)
- Flipboard – An app for both Iphone and Android that gathers news and social media stories and then serves them up depending on your indicated interests. Very cool! You will find articles from many of the above periodicals in it.

Multimedia Websites – to spur your interest in further reading

- TED Talks – TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) is a collection of conferences about “ideas worth spreading.” The emphasis in the videos is on entertainment; complex topics are presented in appealing and accessible ways. (www.ted.com)
- Radiolab – Podcasts of a radio show focusing on scientific and philosophical topics. Fun with distinctive audio style. (www.radiolab.org)