

5 Science-Backed Benefits of Reading for Students

By Daisy Ward

If you don't tend to make a habit of reading, science suggests your university experience might be suffering.

Has our generation fallen out of love with reading? Is it too difficult to read in a world of electronic distraction? I don't think so. But if your love for reading is lacking, here are some student-specific benefits that might nudge you in the right direction.

1. Stress reduction

All students experience stress at varying degrees throughout their time at university. For some it is at its highest around exam season, for others, it is a result of mental health struggles. Some of us might ignore our stress, some even try to cure it with herbal teas or the drinking cure. Though the solution could be much simpler: a good book! A 2009 study by Sussex University found that reading regularly can reduce stress by as much as 68%.

David Lewis cognitive Neuropsychologist told The Telegraph that "It really doesn't matter what book you read, by losing yourself in a thoroughly engrossing book you can escape from the worries and stresses of the everyday world." So, if you are feeling stressed a good book might be the solution!



2. Increased intelligence

Einstein once said, "The only thing you absolutely have to know is the location of the library." As one of history's greatest minds, this highlights the importance of reading for the mind. This benefit is often overlooked, as people tend to focus on the escapism of reading. Though this is important, potentially even more beneficial for your degree is what it can do for your mind. Those who read have more diverse vocabularies, which assists in essay writing and debates.

According to Ken Pugh, president of Haskins Laboratories, parts of the brain such as vision, language, and associative learning connect in a way that is very challenging when reading. Simply, reading is a workout for your brain, which in the long run increases your overall intelligence



3. Better writing skills

People who read a lot are generally well written, as they absorb different writing styles and subconsciously imitate them. And you might be asking, well how is this useful to me? I do a Physics degree. I suppose I am biased as I am a writer and study English literature. Yet, this benefit is critical to all students. All students have to write essays, reports, and emails. Being able to communicate your ideas well, no matter which degree you study is bound to improve your grade.



4. Better sleep

All students, at some point, struggle with sleep. Maybe it's the worry of deadlines keeping you up, or your noisy roommates. Whatever it is research suggests that a good book can help. Creating a ritual before bed, like reading a book tells your body it is time to start slowing down, according to the Mayo Clinic. So maybe opt for a good book, rather than a binge-watch of the next popular Netflix series. Your tired mind will thank you for it in the morning.



5. Improved Empathy

Fiction in particular has the superpower of assisting readers to understand others. In times like these, with a global pandemic and reports of poor mental health on the rise, it is so important to connect with others. It is becoming increasingly hard to connect truly with others, as it seems the screens and devices that are supposed to connect us often do the opposite. The cure to this, for me, is empathy. To put yourself in another's shoes, and really feel how it must be for them. As George RR Martin once said, "A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies."



Reading, therefore, is the key to empathy, as a good read can help you experience, for a moment, the life of another.