

Physical books vs. e-readers: Which is better?

1. Your reading habits

Discuss these questions with a partner:

- How often do you read for pleasure?
- What was the last book you read, and in what format did you read it (physical, e-book, audiobook)?
- Do you have a strong preference for one format over another? Why?

2. Key vocabulary

Before you watch, match the words and phrases with their correct definitions.

1. To multitask	To do more than one thing at the same time.
2. To annotate	Add notes to a text, giving an explanation or comment.
3. Workflow	The sequence of steps you follow to complete a task.
4. To show its age	To look old and well-used over time.

5. Convenient	Fitting in well with a person's needs or activities; causing little trouble.
6. Ecosystem (tech context)	A network of interconnected devices and services from one company (e.g., Apple).
7. Partisan	Strongly supporting only one side, person, or cause.
8. To coexist	To exist together at the same time or in the same place.

3. Video: To read or to e-read?

Watch the video. For his personal reading, what format does the speaker generally use for each type of book? Match them below.

1. Harder, more demanding books: **B) Physical book**
2. Easier fiction (e.g., sci-fi) for fun: **C) E-reader (like a Kindle)**
3. Lighter non-fiction (e.g., personal finance): **A) Audiobook**

Watch the video again and list the main arguments (pros) for each format that the speaker mentions.

Physical books	E-readers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tactile experience / aesthetics (it feels good and looks beautiful). • It promotes focus and allows for deep reading. • It lends itself to his preferred note-taking style (physical annotation). • It's a way to get away from screens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are convenient: all your books are in one place. • They are lightweight and portable. • They have a long battery life. • You can carry thousands of books at once.

Physical books	E-readers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They show their age, which has a romantic appeal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You can instantly buy and access new books.

[Watch the video on YouTube](#)

4. Vocabulary check

Complete the sentences with words from the box below.

multitask

annotating

workflow

partisan

ecosystem

convenient

coexist

show its age

1. It's not a good idea to **multitask** when you are reading a complex philosophical text; it demands your full attention.
2. For me, the most **convenient** thing about an e-reader is being able to carry a whole library on vacation.
3. His note-taking **workflow** involves reading a physical book first and then transferring his notes to cards.
4. He dislikes being locked into the Amazon **ecosystem**, where all his books are tied to one company.
5. The speaker doesn't have a **partisan** view; he thinks you don't have to choose and that both formats are fine.
6. I love how an old, well-read book starts to **show its age**, with a creased spine and faded pages.
7. Physical books and e-readers can peacefully **coexist** in a person's life; you don't need to pick just one.

8. My preferred method of studying is physically **annotating** the book with a pen as I read.

5. Grammar focus: Expressing preferences and making comparisons

When comparing options and stating what you like, you can use more sophisticated phrases than just "I like" or "is better."

- **I have a preference for** physical books. (More formal than "I prefer")
- My **preferred method** of reading is on a Kindle.
- Physical books **lend themselves to** deep, focused reading. (Meaning: are naturally suitable for)
- **The main advantage of** an e-reader is its portability.
- **A key downside to** physical books is that they are heavy.
- I don't think of them as being **in competition with one another**.

Rewrite the following sentences using the phrase in brackets.

1. I prefer reading on a screen when I'm traveling. (**have a preference for**)
→ **I have a preference for reading on a screen when I'm traveling.**
2. The best thing about physical books is the smell of the paper. (**The main advantage of**)
→ **The main advantage of physical books is the smell of the paper.**
3. A big problem with e-readers is that you can get distracted by notifications. (**A key downside to**)
→ **A key downside to e-readers is that you can get distracted by notifications.**
4. Audiobooks are good for listening while you drive. (**lend themselves to**)
→ **Audiobooks lend themselves to listening while you drive.**

5. I like to take notes by hand when I read. (**My preferred method**)

→ My preferred method of taking notes is by hand as I read. / My preferred method is to take notes by hand.

6. Useful phrases for discussion

Study these phrases. You can use them in the next exercise to express your opinions clearly.

Stating a preference:

- "Personally, I have a preference for..."
- "My preferred way to read is..."
- "When it comes to reading, I tend to lean towards..."
- "For me, nothing beats the experience of..."

Listing pros:

- "One of the biggest advantages is..."
- "What I like about it is the fact that..."
- "It's really convenient because..."
- "It lends itself well to..."

Listing cons:

- "The main drawback/downside for me is..."
- "My biggest criticism of it is that..."
- "What I don't like about it is..."
- "It can be a bit of a hassle when..."

7. Discussion: Your turn

Work in small groups. Discuss the following statements. Use the vocabulary and phrases from this lesson to support your opinions and explain your reasoning.

1. "Physical books will eventually become rare items only for collectors."
2. "Listening to an audiobook is not 'real' reading."
3. "The convenience of e-readers and audiobooks outweighs the experience of reading a physical book."
4. "People remember more of what they read from a physical book than from a screen."