Physical books vs. e-readers: which is better? - Video transcript

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00:00 A lot of people ask me if it's better to read **physical books** or if it's better to read from an **e-reader**, and here's the quick answer so you don't have to watch the rest of the video if you don't want to: they're both fine, but there are some advantages and disadvantages to both.

00:13 But before I get to that list, and I will get to it quickly, let me just make two remarks: you shouldn't actually feel like you have to choose. I personally read **physical books** quite often, but I also own a **Kindle** and I've used it for many years. And recently a company called **Onyx** sent me their **Books Note Air 2**, which is a lot like a Kindle except it has a stylus so you can take notes, and for the past month or two, I've been using that as well.

00:38 And I'm not going to talk about **audiobooks** much, but I listen to Audible and a few other audiobook services on my iPhone at least several times a week. And my own reading, it's typically harder books get read as **physical books**, easier fiction that I read for fun, which is mostly science fiction or fantasy, gets read on a **Kindle**. And then lighter non-fiction, say like a personal finance book, I would listen to that as an **audiobook** because I feel okay listening to those books while multitasking.

01:03 And I guess that's the whole thing I'll say about **audiobooks**: people tend to multitask when they listen to audiobooks, which is fine, but you should just understand that some books do not allow you to multitask if you want to understand them. They demand your attention, and so you shouldn't listen to those books as **audiobooks** unless you're willing to basically sit there and just listen.

01:23 But let's talk about why someone might prefer **physical books** over **digital books**. Reading a **physical book** really is my preferred method; it's the one that I love the most.

01:31 The first reason is that I just I like how it feels. I like how **physical books** feel in my hand. I think that a well-printed **physical book** is really beautiful. This is actually not the best printing, it's a little dense, but a well-printed **physical book**, especially like a nice, especially like a nicely proportioned and typeset hard cover, those just feel good. And if you can have a really enjoyable reading experience where you're holding the book and it feels good, then I think you're going to be able to maintain focus on that book for much longer, and it's going to allow you to do that kind of **deep reading** that I really think is so critical if you want to be like a good reader.

02:08 I also think that **physical books** lend themselves towards my preferred **note-taking** style. So my preferred note-taking style is to actually physically annotate books. I then export onto note cards and I sort the note cards, and that's how I get my ideas. I did a whole video about that that you could watch if you're interested. I guess you could say I have a really nice workflow for **physical books**, and I don't see any reason to really change that.

02:29 And a third reason is that I just prefer to get away from **screens** sometimes. I make YouTube videos, I work in tech, I'm on my phone all the time. My whole life is filled with **screens**. Having a place and an activity that I love to do that I regularly do that doesn't involve like charging something or looking at a display that's going to refresh on me or anything like that, it just feels really good. The act of reading itself is kind of my escape.

02:53 And just as a kind of almost romantic point, I like that **physical books** like show their age. I like that when you've read through it, you can tell. I like when you can see a little bit of your annotations from the past. **Digital books** just don't show their age in quite the same way.

03:09 But I'm not totally against using an **e-reader**. This is probably my third **Kindle**. I've been using one for over a decade. I like the fact that all of my **Kindle books** that I've ever bought, they're all available here, like that is really **convenient**. I like the fact that it's light. I like the fact that it holds a charge for a long time, so even though you do have to charge it, you can go a whole vacation and you could just take this thing. I can carry thousands of books with me, and if I want to buy another one, I can usually just access it on some kind of store.

03:36 My biggest criticism of the **Kindle** is that it's locked into the **Amazon ecosystem**. But if that continued to seriously bother me, I could switch to this **Books**. If my biggest criticism of the **Kindle** is that it's locked into the **Amazon ecosystem**, well, this tablet doesn't have those problems. In fact, it just runs **Android**, so you can install other apps, and then you can just buy books directly or you can load them. So you can just put PDFs on here, for instance. This might have been really useful for me actually when I was in graduate school when I read so many articles as PDFs if I wanted to just take **digital versions** of those. In fact, my wife, who's finishing her PhD still, she probably wants to steal this from me so that she can use it for her grad school work.

04:16 **Digital books** and **e-readers** add a kind of **convenience** to your life that for some people means that that's all they're going to want. Like that **convenience** is so valuable that they're willing to give up on the other benefits of reading **physical books**.

04:27 I found that in my personal reading practice, **e-readers** and **physical books** they just naturally coexist. I don't think of them as really in competition with one another. So if you want like the official Jared Henderson statement of, is it better to read **physical books** or to read

ebooks? It should be I have a preference for **physical books**, but I don't feel like you really have to choose and don't feel like you have to be totally partisan about this and you've got to pick one and then argue why the other one is terrible or something. That's the wrong kind of attitude to have.

04:58 There's a good chance that if I'm going to read more **ebooks** in the future, I will switch to something like a **Books U** from **Onyx**. And I don't just say that because they sent me a free one, I really just think it might be a better product. This is not a product review in the traditional sense, you can go find those elsewhere. It seems to have most of the benefits of the **Kindle** and doesn't have many of the downsides. One thing that I really like is that they made it really easy to download public domain books without going through another store or without being charged.

05:25 All right, this is a short video. I'm just trying to get some thoughts out there. If you think I've missed something totally, we can have a debate in the comments about which, which really is better, **physical books** or **digital books**. That's all I have for you today, so until next time, take care.