

A BOOKPROS FIELD GUIDE

THE

Attention Sovereignty

PROTOCOL

*Why You Still Don't Read,
and the 15-Minute Habit That
Brings Deep Reading Back*

It is 10 PM. You read a paragraph, then read it again,
because nothing landed. Your hand has already found the
phone.



You don't have an attention deficit.

You have an attention extraction problem.

And anything being done to you can be interrupted and
redesigned. This guide is that interruption.

AASHIF SHAIKH

b BookPros
p

A BOOKPROS FIELD GUIDE • 14 MODULES • 30 DAYS

The Attention Sovereignty Protocol

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PROOF EDITION

The Attention Sovereignty Protocol

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How this book was made. The first draft was written by AI (Claude) from a production prompt. It was then edited, fact-checked, restructured and designed under the author's direction; every change is recorded in the edit log that accompanies the manuscript. The diagrams and cover were also drawn by AI, as code, under the author's direction.

Not medical advice. This book is about reading habits. It does not diagnose or treat attention disorders. If focus problems are affecting your work, health or relationships, talk to a qualified professional.

Research is cited in Sources and Notes. Figures marked "about" are rounded. Book recommendations are the author's own; there are no affiliate links.

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START HERE

How to Use This Field Guide

Fourteen short modules, one pen, fifteen minutes a day.

This is a field guide, not a lecture. It has fourteen modules in three parts. Part 1 (Modules 1 to 4) shows you what's actually happening when you can't get through a book.

Part 2 (Modules 5 to 8) gives you the system. That means the Micro-Sprint Habit, a way of marking books, a rule for your unread pile, and AI that strengthens your reading. Part 3 (Modules 9 to 14) holds the 30-day plan and the tools that keep it running after day 30.

Every module ends the same way. First a **Tool**: a table to fill in, a checklist, or a calculation you run with your own numbers. Then **The Rule**: one sentence you can act on today. If you only have two minutes, read the Rule. If you have fifteen, do the Tool.

You need three things: a pen, a timer that is not your phone, and one book you have been meaning to read. That's it.

A note on what this book isn't. It is not a speed-reading course, and it won't ask you to read a hundred books a year. It is not medical advice either; if you think you have an attention disorder, talk to a professional. If you have ADHD, the short sprints and the relapse rules may help, but this isn't a treatment plan.

Where a claim rests on research, the source is named in Sources and Notes on page 42. Where a number is a rule of thumb, it says so.

ONE PROMISE

Nothing in this guide depends on willpower. It depends on setup. Do the setup, and the reading takes care of itself.

MODULE 01

The Diagnosis

Rereading the same paragraph at 10 PM isn't a character flaw.

It is 10 PM. The house is finally quiet. You pick up the book you bought three weeks ago, the one everyone in your field keeps quoting. You open to the bookmark.

You read a paragraph. Then you read it again, because nothing landed. By the third pass your hand has already found the phone on the nightstand. You check one thing.

Twenty minutes later you surface, the book is face-down on your chest, and a small, familiar guilt settles in. You close it. Tomorrow, you tell yourself.

Here's what's happening, and it's not what you think. You are not lazy. You are not less intelligent than the person you were at twenty-two, when you could lose a whole Saturday inside a novel. You have spent years practising a different kind of attention, and you have become very good at it.

Every notification, every pull-to-refresh, every autoplay draws on the same limited supply of attention you need for sustained reading. The apps on your phone are built by capable teams whose job is to capture as much of that supply as they can. They are good at their jobs. By 10 PM, there isn't much left.

So the problem isn't that you can't focus. The problem is that your focus has been spent before you ever sit down with the book. That distinction matters. A deficit sounds like something wrong with you. Extraction is something being done to you, and anything being done to you can be interrupted and redesigned.

This guide is that interruption. Fourteen modules. One mechanism. No lectures about willpower.

THE REFRAME

You don't have an attention deficit. You have an attention extraction problem.

Start with an honest number.

TOOL The Uncomfortable Metric (Screen Time vs. Page Time)

Open your phone's screen-time report (iPhone: Settings, then Screen Time. Android: Settings, then Digital Wellbeing). Fill in last week's real numbers, not the numbers you wish were true.

Metric	Last 7 days	Daily average (÷ 7)
Total phone screen time	_____ hrs	_____ hrs
Social, news and video apps	_____ hrs	_____ hrs
Reading books (paper or e-ink)	_____ hrs	_____ hrs
Ratio: screen ÷ page	_____ : 1	_____

There's no official healthy ratio. As a rule of thumb for this book: if yours is above 10 to 1, you're not choosing your inputs. They are being chosen for you.

THE RULE

Tonight, write your screen-to-page ratio on a sticky note and put it inside the front cover of the book you keep failing to finish.

MODULE 02

What the Feed Trains, What the Book Trains

Whatever you practise, you get better at. That includes skimming.

Whatever you do most often, you get better at. This is the good news and the bad news in one sentence.

A feed trains a very specific skill: rapid evaluation and rapid abandonment. See, judge, swipe. Each item takes a few seconds, delivers a small hit of novelty, and asks you to move on.

The attention researcher Gloria Mark has tracked how people use screens at work for two decades. In her recent studies, the average time spent on one screen before switching was about 47 seconds. Do that for a few hours a day, for a few years, and you become very good at skimming. You also grow uncomfortable with anything that doesn't pay off in five seconds.

Your job may be training the same skill. A day of email, chat, dashboards and documents you only have time to skim is the feed with a salary attached. That's why the fix can't be "try harder at 10 PM": the book is up against eight hours of practice going the other way.

A book asks for the opposite skill. It asks you to hold an idea from page 12 in mind while the author builds on it at page 40. It asks you to tolerate confusion for a while, trusting that the argument is going somewhere.

Maryanne Wolf, who studies the reading brain, calls this "deep reading". Her warning is that we build it through practice; we aren't born with it. Stop practising and it weakens.

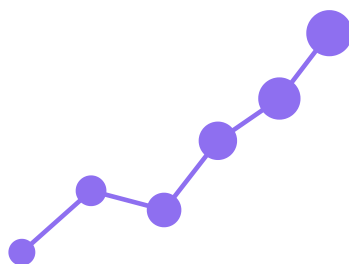
Call the first mode *Information Snacking*. You take in a high volume of disconnected fragments. You feel informed. But fragments rarely link to each other, so very little becomes lasting knowledge. You remember that you saw something about a topic, not what it meant.

Call the second mode *Deep Synthesis*. You follow one line of reasoning long enough for it to connect with what you already know. This is the kind of input that changes how you think, not just what you have recently seen.

Neither mode is evil. The trouble is proportion. When nearly all your input is snacking, sitting with a book starts to feel physically uncomfortable. That discomfort is not proof you're bad at reading. It is a skill out of practice.



THE FEED: 15 ITEMS, 0 LINKS



THE BOOK: 1 ARGUMENT, BUILT UP

Information snacking gives you more items. A book gives you the links between them, which is what you keep.

The medium matters too. A 2018 review of 54 studies, covering more than 170,000 readers, found that people understood informational texts better on paper than on screens. The gap was largest when they read against the clock. It's modest, but it runs in one direction.

TOOL Two Kinds of Input, Side by Side

	The feed	The book
Unit of content	A fragment (seconds)	An argument (hours)
Who sets the order	The algorithm	The author, on purpose
When it pays off	Instantly, unpredictably, often	Later, and it adds up
What it asks of memory	Evaluate and discard	Hold, connect, revise
Skill it trains	Rapid switching	Sustained attention
What it is built for	Your time on the platform	Your understanding
What's left a week later	"I saw something about that"	A changed way of thinking

Tonight, before bed, tick which column got most of your day: ☐ The feed ☐ The book

THE RULE

Treat every feed session as a withdrawal and every book session as a deposit, then check the balance before bed.

The True Economics of a Book

The cheapest mentor you'll ever hire costs about \$20.

Look at what you're actually buying when you buy a serious non-fiction book.

Someone spent ten, twenty, sometimes forty years inside a problem. They made expensive mistakes. They lost money, clients, sometimes careers. They tested ideas against reality until most of them broke, and then spent another year or two compressing what survived into a few hundred pages. Then an editor made it tighter.

You get the output of that whole process for roughly the price of a lunch and about eight hours of careful reading. There are very few purchases where the gap between cost and value is this wide. The downside is small and capped: \$20 and a week of evenings. The upside has no ceiling.

The obvious return is the knowledge itself. The bigger return comes later.

A better way of thinking about a problem doesn't help you once. It quietly improves every decision that passes through it afterwards. If a book on negotiation improves one salary conversation, that alone may repay the cost many times over.

But the same idea also shapes how you handle supplier contracts, hiring, and hard conversations with your team for the next ten years. Each better decision sets up better conditions for the next one. That's compounding, and it works on judgment the way it works on money.

Now compare the alternative. A feed session costs nothing upfront, which is exactly why it feels free. The price is paid in attention, and a week later there's usually nothing to show for it.

A book lets you borrow someone else's decades and apply them to your next quarter. The only way to lose this trade is to never open the book.

TOOL **The Book ROI Ledger**

Input	Value
Book price	\$_____
Hours to read (pages ÷ your pages per hour; about 30 with a pen)	_____ hrs
What an hour of your time is worth	\$_____ /hr
Total cost (price + hours × rate)	\$_____
Years of the author's experience in it	_____ yrs
One decision this book could improve in the next 90 days	_____
What getting that decision right is worth	\$_____
Single-decision return (value ÷ total cost)	_____ ×

Worked example (illustrative, not a promise): a \$20 book plus 8 hours at \$60 an hour is \$500 of real cost. If it improves one pricing conversation by \$3,000, that single decision returns about 6 times the cost, before any compounding.

THE RULE

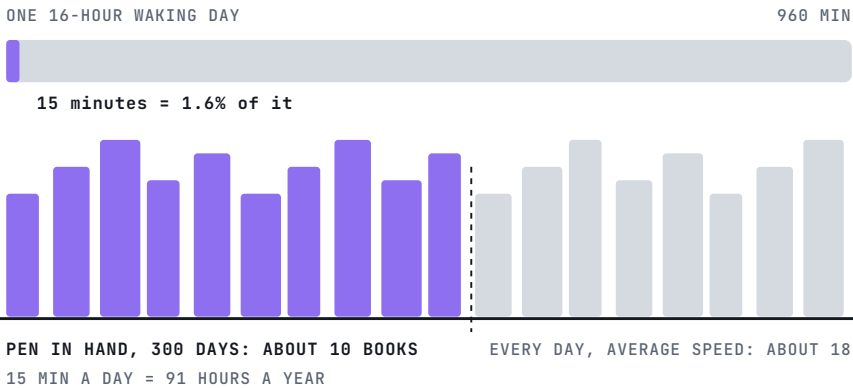
Before you start a non-fiction book, write down one decision it should improve in the next 90 days, so you read it as an investment.

The Three Lies That Stop You Reading

Small, reasonable-sounding stories do most of the damage.

Most people who stop reading never decide to stop. They tell themselves small, reasonable-sounding stories, and the stories do the rest. Here are the three most common.

Lie 1: "I don't have time." You have time. What you don't have is long, uninterrupted blocks, which is a different problem. Fifteen minutes a day is enough. A large 2019 review of reading-speed studies put the adult average for silent reading of non-fiction at about 238 words a minute. That's roughly 12 pages in fifteen minutes. Read slowly with a pen, as this guide will ask you to, and call it 8. Do that on 300 days a year and you read about 2,400 pages: close to ten books. Fifteen minutes is shorter than most lunch breaks.



The adult average for silent reading of non-fiction is about 238 words a minute (Brysbaert, 2019). Reading slowly with a pen, and missing some days, lands nearer 10 books of 250 pages.

Lie 2: "I read articles and threads instead." You read fragments. Fragments are fine for staying current, but they're written to be read fast and shared faster. They rarely carry the full reasoning, the

counterarguments, or the conditions under which an idea fails. If all your inputs are fragments, your thinking gets fragmented too: lots of opinions, very few connected ideas. You end up knowing the conclusion of an argument without knowing why it holds.

Lie 3: "I have to finish every book I start." This one feels like discipline. It's actually a trap. Forcing yourself through a bad book is the fastest way to stop reading altogether, because it turns reading into a chore. Give every book thirty pages. If by page 30 it hasn't earned your attention, close it and move on without apology. The librarian Nancy Pearl popularised a version called the Rule of 50. Give a book 50 pages, and fewer as you get older, because life is too short. Quitting a weak book is not failure. It is choosing where your hours go.

TOOL The 15-Minute Block Maths and the Page-30 Test

Variable	Default	Your number
Minutes per day	15	_____
Pages per 15-minute block (pen in hand)	about 8	_____
Reading days per year (allowing for misses)	300	_____
Pages per year	about 2,400	_____
Average book length	250 pages	_____
Books per year	about 10	_____

At page 30, tick every line that's true:

- ☐ I have underlined at least one idea I want to keep.
- ☐ I can state the author's main argument in one sentence.
- ☐ I want to know what comes next.

Fewer than two ticks? Quit the book. No guilt.

THE RULE

Commit to fifteen minutes a day and the page-30 quit rule: one removes the time excuse, the other removes the guilt.

MODULE 05

The Micro-Sprint Habit, Part 1: The Setup

Design the room so the book wins before you sit down.

The Micro-Sprint Habit is simple on purpose. You read in short, protected sprints of ten to fifteen minutes, at the same time and place each day, with the phone out of reach. That is the whole mechanism. What makes it work isn't the reading. It's the setup around it.

Willpower is a poor strategy against products designed by teams of engineers. Environment is a far better one. The psychologist Wendy Wood, who has studied habits for thirty years, calls this friction. Small amounts of effort placed in front of a behaviour change how often it happens, often more than good intentions do. So the rule is this: make the behaviour you want effortless, and make the one you want to avoid slightly inconvenient.

Right now, your phone is probably effortless. It lives in your pocket, unlocks with your face, and opens to exactly the apps that pull you in. Your book, meanwhile, is on a shelf in another room, or in a bag, or under a pile of post. You have arranged a home that makes scrolling easy and reading hard. Reverse it.

Put the book where your hand already goes: on your pillow, next to the kettle, on the chair you sit in after dinner. Leave a pen clipped to the cover.

Put the phone somewhere that makes you stand up and walk to get it. Not face-down on the table. Another room. Distance is the point.

Read on paper or an e-reader with the wifi off, never a reading app on the phone: the phone is the thing you are escaping. Audiobooks are real reading for pleasure, but this system needs a page, because the four marks need somewhere to go.

Then protect the first thirty minutes of your day. Call it the Analog Sanctuary: no screens for the first half hour after waking. This is a design choice, not a lab finding. If the first thing you see is an inbox or a feed, the day starts with other people's priorities. If the first thing you see is a page, it starts with yours.

You don't need to read for the whole thirty minutes. Five pages with your coffee counts. The only rule is that nothing with a screen goes first.

TOOL The Friction Matrix

Trigger	Your setup now	Redesigned setup	Done
Where the phone sleeps	_____	Charging in another room	☐
Where the book sits	_____	On the pillow, chair or beside the kettle	☐
Pen	_____	Clipped to the book cover	☐
Notifications during a sprint	_____	Focus mode on, or phone off	☐
Sprint time slot	_____	Same time daily: _____	☐
First screen of the day	_____	Not before _____ (wake + 30 min)	☐
What you read on	_____	Paper, or an e-reader with wifi off	☐

Before every sprint:

- ☐ Timer set for 10 to 15 minutes (a kitchen timer, not the phone).
- ☐ Phone out of arm's reach.
- ☐ Pen in hand.
- ☐ Stop when the timer ends, even mid-chapter. Leave yourself wanting more.

THE RULE

Tonight, charge your phone in a different room and put the book on your pillow, so tomorrow the easiest thing to reach is the page.

The Micro-Sprint Habit, Part 2: The 4-Mark Pen System

A book you have written in is a book you remember.

Many people treat books like museum pieces. Clean pages. Unbroken spines. No marks.

It feels respectful. It is also one reason so little of what they read stays with them.

Reading without a pen is like sitting through a lecture without taking notes. The information passes through and little sticks.

The moment you pick up a pen, the job changes. You're no longer just receiving. You're judging what matters and arguing back. That small act of judgment is what moves an idea from the page into your own thinking.

The philosopher Mortimer Adler made the same case in 1941, in an essay called "How to Mark a Book". His argument: you don't own a book until you have made it part of yourself, and writing in it is how.

So give yourself permission. The book is a working notebook. You paid for it. Use it.

To keep this fast, use only four marks. More symbols than that and you'll spend more time on your system than on the book.



UNDERLINE
anchor



MARGIN STAR
action



QUESTION
disagree



CORNER FOLD
core idea

Underline: the Anchor. A sentence that carries a key idea, a definition, or a striking piece of evidence. Be stingy. If you underline everything, you have underlined nothing.

Margin star: the Action. Something you'll actually do. A technique to try, a question to ask your team, a change to make this week. Stars are the most valuable marks in the book.

Question mark: the Disagreement. Where you think the author is wrong, overreaching, or ignoring your situation. These marks keep you a thinker rather than a follower. Some of your best ideas will start here.

Corner fold: the Core Idea. Fold the top corner of any page that holds a big idea connecting to the rest of the book or to your own work. When you finish, the folded pages are your map back through the book. Library book or e-reader? Use a sticky flag, or a highlight colour you keep only for this mark.

Four marks. One pen. Every sprint.

One more step, and it takes ten seconds. Before you close the book, say the chapter's main idea out loud, or write it in one line. Pulling an idea back out of memory makes it stick far better than rereading it; psychologists call this retrieval practice (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006).

TOOL **The 4-Mark Legend**

Mark	Name	Use it when	How often	What happens to it later
Underline	Anchor	A sentence carries a key idea or evidence	1 to 3 a chapter	A quote in your Idea Vault
★ in the margin	Action	You will do something differently	At least 1 a chapter	Your task list next week
? in the margin	Disagreement	You doubt or reject the claim	Whenever it's true	A question for your AI sparring partner (Module 8)
Corner fold	Core Idea	The page holds a big connecting idea	3 to 8 a book	Your one-page book summary

End of every sprint (10 seconds):

- ☐ Did I make at least one mark this sprint?
- ☐ Is there at least one star in this chapter?
- ☐ Can I say the chapter's main idea in one line, without looking?

THE RULE

Never read without a pen in hand, and don't close a chapter until you have placed at least one star.

MODULE 07

The Tsundoku Cleanse

Your unread pile isn't a library. It's a to-do list you never agreed to.

Japanese has a word for it: *tsundoku*, buying books and letting them pile up unread. If you're reading this guide, you probably have a stack. On the nightstand, on the desk, in an e-reader library you avoid scrolling through.

That pile isn't neutral. Every unread book carries a small, quiet message: *you said you would, and you didn't*. Multiply that by thirty books and you have a monument to your own guilt sitting next to your bed. It makes starting any single book harder, because every choice feels like neglecting all the others.

Buying books feels productive. It gives you the feeling of intention without the work of follow-through. That's fine, as long as you're honest about it. The problem starts when the pile becomes a reason not to read at all.

The fix is an Archive Audit. Set aside forty-five minutes. Pull every unread and half-read book into one place. Then sort each one into exactly one of three piles.

Reference: books you'll consult, not read cover to cover. Manuals, handbooks, deep technical works. They go on a shelf, out of the guilt zone.

Discard: books you bought on impulse, that no longer fit your goals, or that failed the page-30 test. Give them to someone who wants them. Letting go is the point.

Active 3: the three books you'll actually read next. No more.



The Rule of Three is strict for a reason. Three gives you variety: one demanding book, one lighter narrative, one book on your craft. More than three and your attention splits again, which is the exact problem you're solving. Nothing new enters the Active 3 until something leaves it.

TOOL The Archive Audit Sheet

#	Book	Reference	Discard	Active 3	Why (one line)
1	_____	☐	☐	☐	_____
2	_____	☐	☐	☐	_____
3	_____	☐	☐	☐	_____
4	_____	☐	☐	☐	_____
5	_____	☐	☐	☐	_____
6	_____	☐	☐	☐	_____

My Active 3:

- Demanding: _____
- Lighter: _____
- Craft: _____

A new book enters only when one of my Active 3 is finished or quit.

☐ I agree.

THE RULE

Run your Archive Audit this weekend and clear every book off your nightstand except your Active 3.

The AI Filter: Why Whole Books Matter More in 2026

Read first. Then argue with the machine.

Here's the obvious objection. It's 2026. You can type a book title into an AI model and get a clean, structured summary in seconds. Why spend eight hours on something you can get in thirty seconds?

Because the summary is not the thing you were paying for.

A summary gives you the author's conclusions. Conclusions are the cheapest part of a book. What changes you is getting there: following the argument step by step, hitting the part that confuses you, pushing through it, noticing where you disagree. That struggle is where your existing assumptions get tested and rebuilt.

Insight is not data transfer. It is what happens to you during the struggle of reading. Skip the struggle and you skip the change.

There's a second reason. When everyone has the same instant summaries, knowing the headline ideas of popular books stops setting you apart. What becomes rare, and therefore valuable, is the ability to think hard about one thing for a long stretch. Deep reading is how you build it.

And a practical one: AI models can misquote books, blend two authors together, or state a claim the book never makes. If you haven't read the chapter, you can't tell.

None of this means ignoring AI. It means changing the order. Read first. Then use the AI.

After you finish a chapter, open Claude or another model and use it as a sparring partner. Tell it what you understood, and ask it to challenge you. Bring the question marks from your margins and ask it to argue the

author's side, then the opposite side. Ask it to test whether you can apply the idea to your actual situation.

Used this way, AI doesn't replace your thinking. It puts pressure on it, and that's what makes the reading stick.

TOOL The Sparring Prompt Kit (use only after reading the chapter)

Goal	Prompt to paste
Test your understanding	"I just read Chapter __ of [book]. Here is my summary in my own words: [summary]. What did I miss or get wrong? Ask me three questions to check."
Steelman the author	"I disagree with this claim: [your ? mark]. Make the strongest possible case for the author's position."
Attack the author	"Now give me the strongest counterargument to that claim, with examples of where it fails."
Apply it to real work	"My situation: [context]. How would this chapter's main idea apply? Where would it break?"
Connect ideas	"How does this idea relate to [another book or framework]? Where do they conflict?"
Wrong way	Right way
Ask AI to summarise a book instead of reading it	Read the chapter, then ask AI to challenge you
Accept the AI's framing as final	Start from your own margin marks
Trust any quote the AI gives you	Check it against the page

THE RULE

Never ask AI to summarise a book you haven't read; bring it chapters you have struggled through, and ask it to argue.

The 30-Day Reading Sprint

Small enough to start tomorrow. Structured enough to last.

A habit doesn't appear because you decide it should. It appears because you repeat a small action in the same place, at the same time, often enough that it stops needing a decision. The next thirty days are built to get you there without burning out in week two.

Week 1: Rebuild your tolerance for slow input. Ten pages a day. That's all. Knowledge comes later. For now, the goal is to learn, again, that sitting with a page for ten or fifteen minutes is bearable, and then pleasant. The first few days will feel restless. You'll want to check the phone. That restlessness is an old habit asking for its usual reward. Let it ask. For most people it fades within the first week or two. Pick a book you actually want to read this week, and fiction counts. The goal is the habit, not the syllabus.

Week 2: Add the pen. Drop the floor to eight pages, because the pen slows you down, and read with all four marks. Aim for at least one star per session. You're moving from reading as consumption to reading as work.

Week 3: Move to a denser book. If you started with something easy to read, such as a memoir or a novel, now pick up a book that makes you work harder. Fiction or not, density is the point. Your attention is stronger now. Expect fewer pages per session. That's normal. Depth costs speed.

Week 4: Start the Synthesis Ritual. Keep reading, and add one session this week to move your stars and folds into your Idea Vault. That can be a notes app, a folder, or NotebookLM. Module 12 shows how.



SAME 15-MINUTE SLOT EVERY DAY. ONLY THE DIFFICULTY RISES.

Miss a day? Don't try to double up. Just read tomorrow. The return matters more than the streak.

TOOL The 30-Day Roadmap

Week	Daily target	Focus	You're on track if
1 (days 1 to 7)	10 pages	Tolerance for slow input	5 of 7 days done
2 (days 8 to 14)	8 pages + pen	The 4-Mark System	1 or more stars per session
3 (days 15 to 21)	6 to 10 pages	A denser book	Past page 30 of it
4 (days 22 to 30)	10 pages + 1 synthesis session	The Synthesis Ritual	First notes in your Idea Vault

Tick each day on the printable 30-Day Tracker on page 41.

THE RULE

Start Week 1 tomorrow at ten pages a day, and if you miss a day, don't make it up; simply read the next day.

The Pillar Stack

Ten books worth the struggle, and permission to quit any of them.

Choosing what to read is its own skill. A bad pick in Week 3 can undo the momentum of the first two weeks. So here is a starting stack of ten books. Each one earned its place by changing how you think in a way that keeps paying off, not by being fashionable.

They fall into four groups. *Strategic Thinking* sharpens how you make decisions when you can't be sure. *Focus and Mastery* goes straight at the problem this guide is about: protecting your attention and reading well. *Human Psychology* explains why people, including you, behave the way they do; if your work involves leading, selling or persuading anyone, don't skip it. *Systems Design* teaches you to see the structures behind results, so you stop blaming single events and start fixing the machinery that produces them.

A few notes on using the list. You don't need to read all ten this year. Pick one as a candidate for your next Active 3 slot. Apply the page-30 test to every one of them, including these.

If a book on this list doesn't work for you right now, quit it without guilt. It may work in two years. Timing matters more than reputation.

Some of these are long. *Poor Charlie's Almanack* and *Thinking, Fast and Slow* reward being read in sprints over a month or two. That's exactly what the Micro-Sprint Habit is for.

And remember the order: read the book first, then bring it to your AI sparring partner.

TOOL The 10 Pillar Books

Group	Book	Why read it
Strategic Thinking	<i>Thinking, Fast and Slow</i> , Daniel Kahneman (2011)	The two modes behind your judgments and the predictable errors each one makes, so you can catch your own biases before they cost you.
Strategic Thinking	<i>Poor Charlie's Almanack</i> , Charles T. Munger, ed. Peter D. Kaufman (2005)	Munger's "latticework" of mental models and his habit of inverting problems: ask what would guarantee failure, then avoid it.
Strategic Thinking	<i>Antifragile</i> , Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2012)	Stop trying to predict shocks; build a career and a set of bets that gain from disorder.
Focus and Mastery	<i>Deep Work</i> , Cal Newport (2016)	The case that focused, undistracted work is getting rarer and more valuable, with concrete rules for building the capacity.
Focus and Mastery	<i>How to Read a Book</i> , Mortimer J. Adler (1940; revised with Charles Van Doren, 1972)	The classic manual for active reading: the levels of reading and how to question a book as you go.
Focus and Mastery	<i>The Shallows</i> , Nicholas Carr (2010)	A careful argument about how life online reshapes the way we read and think. It predates the short-video era, which makes it more pointed, not less.
Human Psychology	<i>Influence</i> , Robert B. Cialdini (1984)	The core principles of persuasion, so you can use them honestly and notice when they are being used on you.
Human Psychology	<i>Atomic Habits</i> , James Clear (2018)	Behaviour change broken into small, designable steps; it backs up the setup rules in Module 5.
Systems Design	<i>Thinking in Systems</i> , Donella H. Meadows (2008)	A short, clear primer on feedback loops, stocks and flows. Once you see systems, you stop fighting symptoms.
Systems Design	<i>The Goal</i> , Eliyahu M. Goldratt and Jeff Cox (1984)	A business novel that teaches the Theory of Constraints: find the bottleneck, fix it, repeat. An easy way into a dense idea.

My candidate for the next Active 3 slot: _____

THE RULE

Pick the one book from this stack that addresses your biggest current problem, and make it the next entry in your Active 3.

MODULE 11

The Attention Ledger

You can't manage what you haven't measured. Measure it today.

Up to now you have been reading about the problem. This module is where you measure it. Don't skip it. People who skip the audit tend to underestimate their numbers, sometimes by a lot, and a plan built on a guess usually fails.

Start with pickups. Your phone counts how many times you pick it up each day (iPhone calls them Pickups; Android's Digital Wellbeing calls them Unlocks). That number can matter more than total screen time, because every pickup is an interruption. Even a ten-second check breaks your train of thought.

In Gloria Mark's workplace studies, interrupted people took about 25 minutes on average to get back to the original task. Often they did two other things first.

Next, work out your lost hours. Not all screen time is wasted. Some of it is work, maps, calls with people you love. Be fair to yourself.

But be honest about the rest: the scrolling you didn't plan, didn't much enjoy, and couldn't describe an hour later. That's the time you can take back.

Then choose your reading window. There's no correct time.

Early morning works if you can protect it before the day starts making demands. Lunch works if you have a predictable break and somewhere to sit away from your desk. Evening works if you can put the phone away before bed. Pick the window you can defend most often, not the one that sounds most virtuous.

Finally, sign the Clean Hour contract: one hour a day, of your choosing, with no screens at all. Your reading sprint sits inside it. The rest can be a walk, a conversation, or just thinking. It sounds small. For many people it

will be the first hour in years that nothing is competing for.

TOOL The Attention Ledger

A. The pickup audit

Metric	Last 7 days	Daily average
Pickups (or unlocks)	_____	_____
Notifications received	_____	_____
Time of first pickup	_____	_____
Most-used app	_____	_____ min/day

B. Lost hours

Line	How	Result
A. Daily screen time	From your phone's report	_____ hrs
B. Necessary screen time (work, calls, maps)	Your honest estimate	_____ hrs
C. Unplanned, low-value time	A minus B	_____ hrs/day
D. Per week	$C \times 7$	_____ hrs
E. Per year	$D \times 52$	_____ hrs
F. Books that time could pay for	$E \times 30$ pages an hour $\div$ 250 pages a book	_____ books

C. Your reading window (pick one)

- ☐ Early morning, inside the Analog Sanctuary: from _____ to _____
- ☐ Lunch, away from the desk: from _____ to _____
- ☐ Evening, phone in another room: from _____ to _____

THE CLEAN HOUR CONTRACT

I, _____, commit to one Clean Hour each day, from _____ to _____, with no screens of any kind. My reading sprint happens inside it. If I break it, I don't quit; I restart the next day. Signed _____ Date _____

THE RULE

Fill in section B today: once your lost hours become a number of books, the Clean Hour stops feeling like a sacrifice.

The Idea Vault

A book isn't finished when you close it. It's finished when you use it.

Reading without synthesis is like earning money and never putting it in the bank. It feels productive at the time, but six months later you can't find it. Forgetting is fast. In 1885 Hermann Ebbinghaus first measured how quickly unreviewed memories fade, and later research has broadly confirmed his steep early drop. The Idea Vault is how you keep what matters.

It starts with the marks you're already making. When you finish a book, or weekly from Week 4 of the roadmap, sit down for thirty minutes with the book and your computer.

Go to every folded corner and every star. Type the key idea in your own words, not the author's, and add the page number. For each question mark, write one line on why you disagreed. This is your raw export.

Where it lives matters less than keeping it in one place. A simple folder structure works: one folder per book, with one file for notes, one for actions and one for disagreements. If you want an AI-assisted setup, upload your typed notes to a tool like NotebookLM, which answers questions using only the sources you give it.

Ask it which books mentioned an idea, or where two authors disagree. The rule stays the same: upload your notes, not someone else's summary. The value is in what *you* noticed.

Then comes the step most readers never take: turn the book into things you'll use at work.

A *framework*: one diagram or model you can apply to a problem that keeps coming back. A *decision checklist*: five to seven questions drawn from the book that you run before a certain kind of decision. A *team memo*: a one-page note sharing the most useful idea with the people you work with.

One book. Three lasting assets. That's how reading turns into better work.

TOOL The Vault and the 1-Book, 3-Assets Sheet

Each finished book goes through the same three steps: the marks in the book become three notes, and the notes become three things you use at work.



Keep all of it in one place: a notes app, one folder per book, or NotebookLM. Upload your own notes, never someone else's summary.

Asset	Question to answer	Draft (one line)	Done
Framework	Which model from this book can I reuse on a recurring problem?	_____	☐
Decision checklist	Which 5 to 7 questions should I ask before a specific kind of decision?	_____	☐
Team memo	Which single idea would most improve how my team works?	_____	☐

THE RULE

Within seven days of finishing a book, export your stars and folds and make one of the three assets, or it isn't finished.

MODULE 13

The Relapse Protocol

You'll slip. The plan for slipping is part of the plan.

You'll slip. Everyone does. A deadline week hits, a child gets sick, you travel, and suddenly it has been nine days since you opened the book.

That doesn't mean the system failed. It's a normal part of building any habit. What matters isn't whether you slip, but how quickly you come back.

The most common failure point is the Chapter 4 wall. The opening chapters of a book are usually the most energetic: the author lays out the big idea and the stories are vivid.

Then, around the middle, things get denser. The argument slows. You stop looking forward to the sprint. Then you stop doing it.

When that happens, don't force it. Diagnose it. Is the book genuinely bad, or just hard? If it's bad, you have permission to quit, even past page 30. If it's hard but worth it, switch to the lighter book in your Active 3 for a few days, then come back.

The deeper rule is the 10-Minute Reset. When you feel yourself sliding, don't stop. Step down. Cut the sprint to ten minutes. If that's still too much, cut it to two pages.

Open the cover, read two pages, close it. That's a complete session.

NORMAL DAY

15 minutes, your target

BAD DAY

10 minutes

THE FLOOR

open the cover, read 2 pages

The rule is to step down a rung, never off the ladder. The streak you protect is "opened the book," not "hit the target."

It sounds too small to matter. It isn't. What you're protecting is not the page count. It's the habit loop itself: the same cue (the time and the place), the same action (opening the book), the same small finish.

Keep that loop running and it rebuilds momentum when life calms down. Stop opening the cover entirely, and restarting later feels like starting from zero.

Two pages keeps the door open. Keep the door open.

TOOL **The Troubleshooting Matrix**

Symptom	Likely cause	Fix
Rereading the same paragraph	Tired, or the phone is within reach	Move the sprint earlier; phone to another room
Stuck at the Chapter 4 wall	The book moved from story to dense argument	Switch to your lighter Active 3 book for 3 days, then return
Dreading the sprint	The book is bad, or the target is too high	Rerun the page-30 test; drop to 2 pages
Missed 3 or more days in a row	Your schedule changed	Start the 10-Minute Reset (down to 2 pages if needed)
Reading but not remembering	Reading without the pen	Back to the 4 marks; no chapter closes without a star
Buying more books than you read	Tsundoku is back	Rerun the Archive Audit; enforce the Rule of Three

The Relapse Protocol, in order:

1. ☐ Notice the slip, without judging it.
2. ☐ Today: open the book and read two pages. Nothing more.
3. ☐ Tomorrow: two pages again.
4. ☐ Day 3: back to your normal target if it feels easy.
5. ☐ What caused the slip? _____

THE RULE

When you slip, don't skip the book entirely; open the cover and read two pages, because opening it keeps the loop alive.

MODULE 14

The Reader's Manifesto

Reading as a deliberate act of freedom.

Go back to the scene in Module 1. It is 10 PM. The house is quiet. The book is in your hands.

This time the phone is charging in the kitchen. The book is one of your Active 3, chosen on purpose. There's a pen clipped to the cover. You have fifteen minutes, and you know exactly what to do with them.

You read. You underline one sentence, star one idea you'll try tomorrow, and put a question mark next to a claim you don't buy. The timer goes off. You close the book, and for the first time in a long time what you feel is not guilt. It is ownership.

That is what attention sovereignty means. Not perfection. Not a hundred books a year. It means you decide where your mind goes, instead of letting the most aggressively designed product in your pocket decide for you.

This matters more than it used to. When machines can produce unlimited summaries, content and answers, information is no longer scarce. The ability to think deeply about it is. Every sprint you complete builds that ability. Every book you finish, mark up, argue with and put to use widens the gap between you and people who only read the summary.

Reading, in this sense, is a deliberate act of freedom. No feed makes money from your fifteen minutes with a book.

The tools in this guide are yours to keep using. The Attention Ledger (page 31) and the 30-Day Tracker (page 41) are printable, so photocopy them as often as you like. For more free author and reader tools, scan the code below.



Scan for the BookPros Author Vault

bookpros.info/vault

Free tools, checklists and guides for readers and authors.

Put the phone in the other room. Open the cover. Begin.

TOOL The Reader's Manifesto

1. My attention is mine. I decide who gets it.
2. I read the book before I read the summary.
3. I read with a pen. Books are notebooks, not museum pieces.
4. I quit bad books at page 30, without guilt.
5. I keep only three books in active circulation.
6. I protect the first thirty minutes of my day from screens.
7. I use AI to argue with my thinking, never to replace it.
8. I turn what I read into things I use.
9. When I slip, I read two pages and keep the loop alive.
10. Fifteen minutes a day is enough to change my mind.

Signed _____ Date _____

THE RULE

Sign the Manifesto, put your phone in another room, and do your first fifteen-minute sprint before you go to sleep tonight.

PRINTABLE • TRACKER

The 30-Day Sprint Tracker

Printable. Photocopy it, pin it next to the book, and tick each day.

In each box, write the pages you read and one mark: ★ if you starred something, ? if you disagreed with something. A two-page day still counts as a tick.

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
DAY 6	DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10
DAY 11	DAY 12	DAY 13	DAY 14	DAY 15
DAY 16	DAY 17	DAY 18	DAY 19	DAY 20
DAY 21	DAY 22	DAY 23	DAY 24	DAY 25
DAY 26	DAY 27	DAY 28	DAY 29	DAY 30

The weekly check-in

Week	Average pickups a day	Sprints done	Pages read	Stars	Clean Hours kept
1	_____	/ 7	_____	_____	/ 7
2	_____	/ 7	_____	_____	/ 7
3	_____	/ 7	_____	_____	/ 7
4	_____	/ 9	_____	_____	/ 9

At the end of week 4, compare your pickups with week 1. You're not aiming for zero. You're aiming for a number you chose.

Sources and Notes

Where the numbers in this guide come from.

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Notes on the numbers

- **Pages per block.** 238 words a minute for 15 minutes is about 3,570 words, roughly 12 pages at 300 words a page. This guide assumes about 8, because reading with a pen is slower.
- **"About 18 books."** 15 minutes a day for 365 days is 91 hours. At 238 words a minute that's about 1.3 million words, or 18 books of 70,000 words. The more realistic figure used in the tools (about 10 a year) assumes 300 reading days at a careful pace.
- **The 10 to 1 ratio (Module 1)** is this book's rule of thumb, not a research threshold.
- **The phone in the room.** You may have seen a claim that just having your phone on the desk lowers your working memory (Ward and colleagues, 2017). Later replications have been mixed, so this guide doesn't rely on it. Moving the phone to another room is recommended for a simpler reason: friction (Module 5).

About the Author

And how this book was made.

Aashif Shaikh is the founder of BookPros.info, a resource for independent authors on writing, publishing and marketing books.

How this book was made. *The Attention Sovereignty Protocol* is the third worked example for The 2026 Author Blueprint, built to show a finished adult non-fiction result. The first draft was written by AI (Claude) from a single production prompt. It was then edited under the author's direction. Facts were checked against the sources above and the reading-speed maths was corrected. Claims about the brain were cut back to what the research supports, and every module was restructured for print. The full edit log is kept with the manuscript. That record of human editing is part of what makes a book like this the author's own.

Proof edition. This copy is a proof, shared as an example and not for sale.

YOUR TURN

If this guide helped you read one book this month, it did its job.
Pass it to someone who keeps a pile on their nightstand.

You buy books. You don't finish them. This is the way back.

You reread the same paragraph three times, then reach for your phone. It isn't a character flaw. Your attention is being spent before you ever sit down with the book.

This field guide gives you a system that doesn't depend on willpower: one protected 15-minute block a day, a room set up so the phone loses, and a way of marking books that turns them into something you use.

It is 44 pages on purpose. You can finish it in an evening, because the last thing you need is another long book.

01 The 15-minute maths: 10 to 18 books a year from one short daily block

02 The 4-mark pen system and the Active 3 shelf rule

03 How to use AI as a sparring partner after you read, not instead of reading

04 A 30-day sprint, a printable attention ledger, and a plan for the day you slip

Aashif Shaikh is the founder of BookPros.info, a resource for independent authors on writing, publishing and marketing books.

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