

Learning how to learn

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How to find a book you want to buy: Some selection criteria

In the world of today, libraries and bookshops and relevant places are cramped with millions of books in each scientific discipline or subject matter. As a reader, pursuing learning in your areas of interest, you need to possess some skills to help you find the book that mostly fit with your preference and knowledge requirements. Here are some useful tips to make your job in selecting a book easy and efficient.

- Look at the book title: this may help in two ways; firstly, the title and subtitle may match some key words in your reading topic. Secondly, the name of the author may sound familiar to you or be an authority in the discipline.
- Look at the date of publication and observe the edition number: knowledge is rapidly expanding; therefore an old book may not be relevant. So you should look for books that are recently published. Whether it is first, second, third or more edition of the book tells important message about the popularity and contemporary nature of the book.
- Look at the publisher's introduction of the book: this is usually found on the back cover of the book and gives brief account about the book, the author and sometimes the intended readership (audience).
- Look at the content page: this will show you the areas covered by the book and will give you insight into the organization capabilities of the author.
- Look through the preface or introduction: this helps in identifying the scope of the book and the approach of the author. Reading the introduction can mostly decide whether to accept or reject the book.
- Look up a specific item in the index: this gives an example of how the author deals with certain topic of interest to you.

- Look at the bibliography: the bibliography (list of references and sources consulted) sometimes tells about the author's approach and can be useful in providing you with further readings in your subject of enquiry
- Leaf through the book: skim through the book, noting chapter beginnings and ends, summaries and diagrams. All these often sum up arguments of the author and give a general sense of the usefulness of the book.

This entire checklist should take no more than few minutes at the end of which you will be able to decide on having the book or not. You can experiment with this and apply these criteria to a certain book and see how it turns out to be!

Sources

Ashman, S. & Crème, P. (1996) Reading for study. London, University of North London Publishing

Buzan, T. (2006) Use your head: Innovative learning and thinking techniques to fulfill your potential. BBC Active