



# How to select, read & review an Islamic book

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& ISLAMIC RESOURCE CENTRE

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## STEP 1: SELECT A BOOK

- Come on over to MARC, or another library, bookstore, or Islamic website with e-books
- Search for a book about a subject that interests you or addresses your questions. Perhaps you want to read/learn more about... Tafsir, philosophy, spirituality, Islamic history (early, middle or recent), legal matters, poetry, Islamic finance, ethical issues, Islamic sciences ... the possibilities are endless. You can browse until something stands out, or look at our suggested reading list.
- Read the front, back, and table of contents, skim the beginning or a random part in the middle. Be open-minded and don't judge by the cover alone!
- Pick a book that interests you enough and is of a length that you know you can finish.

## STEP 2: READ THE BOOK

- Set aside some time for reading the book – if it is a short one, you may be able to finish it in a single sitting, otherwise allocate some time to read it on an ongoing basis.
- As you read, jot down notes about new concepts and terms (it's okay to pause your reading to look up unfamiliar terms), ideas you want to learn more about or questions that are raised. If complex or elaborate ideas are presented, it may be helpful to draw a chart or diagram.
- If the author makes a reference to other books you want to look up, note them down.
- Don't write in the book or fold its pages – unless it's your own copy!
- When you are finished reading the book, make a quick summary of the plot or main points.

## STEP 3: WRITE A REVIEW

- The goal of a book review is:
  1. To tell others about the content of the book
  2. To share your judgment of the book.
- The summary you wrote can provide the material for the first part – mention enough of the book's plot/content to give others a sense of what it is about and what knowledge would be gained by reading it. If the aim of the book is to argue a certain thesis, what is that thesis?
- For the second part, we want to know what you think of the book! The pink box has some suggestions of the kinds of things you could consider, but you certainly don't have to talk about them all!
- Bear in mind the kind of book you're reading when evaluating it – e.g. a book of jurisprudence doesn't have to be suspenseful but it should be written in a way that would be helpful for people who want to know how to act in a certain situation. With a little reflection, it may also give one a better appreciation for the wisdom of divine laws.



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## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN PROVIDING AN EVALUATION OF A BOOK TO OTHERS:

- Do the externals of the book (title, cover, etc.) give a correct idea of what the book is about?
- What kind of audiences would benefit from the book?
- What is the difficulty level of the book? What level of prior knowledge is expected of the reader?
- What issues does the book bring forth and help us understand?
- What is unique/ noteworthy about the book?
- Is there a particular part you want to draw attention to?
- What is the background of the author? Does he/she have a particular bias?
- Is the thesis of the book convincingly argued?
- Is the book well researched?
- Would you recommend the book to others?

## PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Did the book give you what you were looking for? (E.g. did it expand your knowledge on the subject? Did it answer your question(s)?)
- How does the book compare to other related books you have read?
- Has the book triggered your interest for other books or more knowledge relating to what was discussed?
- Has the book raised new questions for which you want to find answers?
- What will you take away or do differently after reading this book?