

Ideas for wider reading/subject exploration

Strong applicants to Cambridge and other competitive universities tend to have explored their chosen subject through wider reading outside the classroom, as well as doing very well in their GCSEs and A-levels. We call this sort of exploration ‘super-curricular’, rather than ‘extra-curricular’, as it builds on and enhances what you are studying in school.

This selection of reading lists and resources has been gathered (fairly randomly!) from the Cambridge departmental and College websites, other universities and other sources on the internet. **These lists are certainly NOT ‘required reading’ for Cambridge applicants.** They simply provide some suggestions for places to start exploring your own interests in your chosen subject independently - you do not need to read any of the specific books mentioned.

It is important to read critically by thinking carefully about the arguments, assumptions and evidence being presented by the author. Reading quality news sources can be a useful way to encounter stories relevant to your academic interests and, more generally, to practise assessing arguments and weighing evidence. Some suggestions include:

Broadsheet newspapers: The Guardian, The Times, Independent, Daily Telegraph

- BBC News online: www.bbc.co.uk/
- Al Jazeera English: www.aljazeera.com/
- The Economist: www.economist.com/
- CNN online: <http://edition.cnn.com/>
- The New Statesman magazine: www.newstatesman.com/

You do not need to buy any books – as well as using web resources, it is always worth visiting your local library as well as your school or college library. If you have a university near your home, you might be able to gain access to their library collections as well, which will include more specialist academic books and journals. Whichever library you visit, try speaking to librarians and asking them to suggest relevant reading and online resources on particular subjects, or to order in books which you would like to have a look at.

If you are looking for suggested reading which is specific to Cambridge, it is worth checking College websites for their reading lists for offer holders, as well as looking at the relevant faculty pages; for example, King’s College has particularly useful lists arranged by subject:

www.kings.cam.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/offerholders/reading-lists/index.html

Reading is a great way to explore subjects which you find interesting – but there are many other ways to deepen your understanding: investigate your local museums, monuments, galleries and natural features, and think analytically about nature, machinery or the built environment.

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Universities in your local area may run seminars, taster days or other Outreach activities which you could attend. You might also like to join a regional or national club or society related to your academic interests, or enter competitions such as essay prizes or maths Olympiads.

Cambridge and Oxford Universities both have websites dedicated to subject exploration. www.myheplus.com/ contains resources written by Cambridge academics for many of the subjects we offer, while <https://explore.org/> is “the Home of Big Questions” where both sides of topical questions which may have no right answer can be explored. It is also worthwhile to look on BBC iPlayer for factual TV and radio programmes; “In Our Time” is a particularly useful introduction to hundreds of subjects: www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/in-ourtime/archive/ Podcasts of academic lectures are increasingly available – start with iTunes U or search for podcasts on University websites.

The best thing about super-curricular activities is that there are no exams or deadlines to worry about – you are free to follow your own lines of enquiry into the areas that interest you the most. Rather than seeing this as a ‘tick box exercise’ to give you something to write about in your personal statement, you should take time to explore things that you genuinely find interesting and see where your investigations lead you.

These suggested sources of wider reading begin with some university reading lists for prospective students or undergraduates, and then include links to websites of organisations or publications which may provide further resources. They have been arranged alphabetically in categories according to the Cambridge undergraduate courses, but students applying to other university courses should be able to find relevant resources by looking at the lists for related subjects.

Suggestions for the Humanities and Social Sciences

Anglo-Saxon Norse and Celtic: www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/currentstudents/undergraduates/reading-lists/intro-reading.htm

Links to Anglo-Saxon sites and resources: www.ravensgard.org/gerekr/anglo.html

Archaeology (including Assyriology, Biological Anthropology and Egyptology):

<https://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/prospective-students/undergraduates/prospective-undergraduate-reading-list>

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Assyriology: <https://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/about-us/mesopotamia/mesopotamia-studies/mesopotamia-ugrad-studies>

Biological Anthropology: <https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/study-us/undergraduates/offer-holders/subject-reading-lists/biological-anthropology/>
www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/departments/prehistory_and_europe/reading_list.aspx
www.thenakedscientists.com/HTML/podcasts/archaeology/ (Podcasts)

Current Archaeology Magazine: www.archaeology.co.uk/

Young Archaeologists' Club: www.yac-uk.org/

The British Museum: www.britishmuseum.org/explore.aspx

Architecture:

<https://www.arct.cam.ac.uk/Downloads/books-recommended-for-reading>

www.clare.cam.ac.uk/data/uploads/Architecture.pdf

www.archi-ninja.com/list-of-architecture-books-for-student-architects/

http://rebirthofreason.com/Articles/Cresswell/Reading_List_So_You_Want_to_Study_Architecture.shtml

Asian and Middle Eastern Studies:

www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/departments/middle_east/reading_list.aspx

Arabic & Persian Studies: www.ames.cam.ac.uk/dmes/islamic/preparatory.htm

Hebrew & Semitic Studies: www.ames.cam.ac.uk/dmes/hebrew/preparatory.htm

Chinese: www.ames.cam.ac.uk/deas/chinese/preparatory.htm

Japanese: www.ames.cam.ac.uk/deas/japanese/preparatory.htm

Al Jazeera English: www.aljazeera.com/

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Rosie Sharkey, Trinity College Cambridge, 2012
Updated by Fergus Powell, Homerton College Cambridge, 2018
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Classics:

<http://www.greeksromansus.classics.cam.ac.uk/>

<http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/admissions/classics-reading-for-prospective-students.pdf>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/student/student-life/books/10-ancient-classics-every-student-should-read-sophocles-homer-the-odyssey-aristotle-plato-a7541491>.

Oxford Classical Art Research Centre: www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/index.htm

Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents: www.csad.ox.ac.uk/csad/

The Roman Society: www.romansociety.org/

The Hellenic Society: www.hellenicsociety.org.uk/

Economics:

<http://www.econ.cam.ac.uk/ba/PrelimReadingList.pdf>

Institute for Economic Affairs: www.iea.org.uk/

The Economist magazine: www.economist.com/

National Institute of Economic and Social Research: www.niesr.ac.uk/

International Monetary Fund: www.imf.org/external/

The Financial Times: <https://www.ft.com/> (behind a paywall, but check your school or local library for past issues)

Education:

<http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/courses/undergrad/downloads/Reading%20list%20for%20prospective%20applicants%20revised%20Tripos.pdf>

Educational Psychology Links: www.edpsycinteractive.org/materials/internet.html

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English:

Read widely and think critically about what you read. Pursue your own interests in literature, but bear in mind that it is a good idea to read some pre-twentieth century works and poetry as well as contemporary novels.

www.kings.cam.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/offerholders/reading-lists/english.html

www.english.cam.ac.uk/cambridgeauthors/

Poetry Society: www.poetrysociety.org.uk/

Literary Review: www.literaryreview.co.uk/

Times Literary Supplement: www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/

Geography:

<http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/subjects/geography/reading.html>

National Geographic: www.nationalgeographic.com/

Geographical Association: <http://geography.org.uk/>

Royal Geographical Society: <https://www.rgs.org/>

Joint Nature Conservation Committee: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/>

Geological Society: www.geolsoc.org.uk/

British Geological Survey: www.bgs.ac.uk/

History:

<https://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/prospective-undergrads/virtual-classroom/suggested-reading>

Internet Medieval Sourcebook - hundreds of primary texts available online:

www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook2.asp

Internet Modern Sourcebook – thousands of primary sources, secondary sources and texts on historiography: www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.asp

Reviews in History: www.history.ac.uk/reviews/

British Museum: www.britishmuseum.org/

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History Today Magazine: www.historytoday.com/

BBC History: www.bbc.co.uk/history/

Historical Association: <http://history.org.uk/>

Royal Historical Society: www.royalhistoricalsociety.org/

Fitzwilliam Museum: www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/onlineresources/

Ashmolean Museum: www.ashmolean.org/collections/

History and Modern Languages:

Please see the “History” and “Modern and Medieval Languages” sections.

History and Politics:

Please see the “History” and “Human, Social and Political Sciences” sections.

History of Art:

<https://www.hoart.cam.ac.uk/Admissions/undergraduate-admissions/what-will-i-study/preparatory-reading>

<https://www.hoa.ox.ac.uk/suggested-reading>

<https://vle.courtauld.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=487#section-9>

Royal Academy: www.royalacademy.org.uk/

Human, Social and Political Sciences (encompassing Social Anthropology, Sociology and Politics and International Relations):

<https://www.hsps.cam.ac.uk/prospective-students/subjects>

<https://www.soas.ac.uk/library/subjects/anthropology/general-resources-and-organisations/>

Some of the suggested background reading from the old PPS course may also be of interest:

www.kings.cam.ac.uk/files/undergraduate/pps-reading-for-prospective-students.pdf

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- **Social Anthropology:**

Discover Anthropology: www.discoveranthropology.org.uk/

Royal Anthropological Institute: <http://therai.org.uk/>

Association on Social Anthropologists: <http://theasa.org/>

- **Sociology**

www.goodreads.com/list/show/2034.Sociology_Books

British Sociological Association: www.britisoc.co.uk/

British journal of Sociology: <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/BJS/home.aspx>

BBC Thinking Allowed: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qy05

- **Politics and International Relations:**

<http://tutor2u.net/blog/index.php/politics/comments/politics-reading-list/>

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/04/09/my-top-ten-books-every-student-of-international-relations-should-read/>

Talking Politics (weekly podcast): <https://www.talkingpoliticspodcast.com>

Oxford Politics microsite: <http://politicsinspires.org/>

The Economist magazine: www.economist.com/

Political Studies Association: www.psa.ac.uk/

UK parliament: www.parliament.uk/

United Nations: www.un.org/en/

Chatham House on International Affairs: www.chathamhouse.org/

Amnesty: <http://amnesty.org/>

Land Economy:

<https://www.landecon.cam.ac.uk/Undergraduate-study/suggested-reading>

Institute for Economic Affairs: www.iea.org.uk/

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/>

Law:

<http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/files/undergraduate/law-reading-for-prospective-students.pdf>

Department of Justice: www.justice.gov.uk/

Judiciary of England and Wales: www.judiciary.gov.uk/

Legislation database: www.legislation.gov.uk/

Counsel Magazine: www.counselmagazine.co.uk/

Guardian Law pages: www.guardian.co.uk/law

BBC Law in Action: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006tgy1

Linguistics:

<https://www.mml.cam.ac.uk/dtal/undergraduates/preliminary-reading>

www.ling-phil.ox.ac.uk/reading_prelims

<http://linguistlist.org/issues/>

SIL International: <https://www.sil.org/>

Modern and Medieval Languages:

Read newspapers and magazines, watch TV and films and listen to the radio. Read literature in English translation, as well as trying some in the original language.

<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/modern-and-medieval-languages> (the “resources” section has links to online resources and suggested reading for some languages)

• **Newspapers:**

Le Monde: www.lemonde.fr

Suddeutsche Zeitung: www.suddeutsche.de

El Pais: www.elpais.com

Corriere Della Sera: www.corriere.it

Diario de Noticias: www.dn.pt

German, Spanish and French exercises: www.multikultura.org.uk/

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European radio stations directory: <http://www.listenlive.eu/index.html>

Portugese literature in translation: www.thingsmeanalot.com/2009/10/sunday-salon-portuguese-literature.html

Russian literature: <http://lizoksbooks.blogspot.co.uk/2008/11/top-10-fiction-hits-of-russian.html>

Music:

<https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/study-us/undergraduates/offer-holders/subject-reading-lists/music/>

https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/field/field_document/List%20of%20Recommended%20Reading%20for%20Music.pdf

Royal Academy of music: www.ram.ac.uk/

Philosophy:

<https://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/prosp-students/prosp-ugrad-readlinglist>

<http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/offerholders/reading-lists/philosophy.html>

Philosophical Society: www.philosophicalsociety.com/

Theology, Religion, and Philosophy of Religion:

<https://www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/currentstudents/ba/introductory-reading>

<https://www.greek.divinity.cam.ac.uk/>

<http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/offerholders/reading-lists/theology.html>

Ian Ramsay Centre for Science and Religion: www.ianramseycentre.info/

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Suggestions for the Sciences

These suggested sources of wider reading begin with some university reading lists for prospective students or undergraduates, and then include links to websites of organisations or publications which may provide further resources. As these reading suggestions are organised according to the Cambridge undergraduate courses, suggested resources for Physics, Chemistry and Biological Sciences can be found under 'Natural Sciences', where we have also included more general resources which may be of interest to you if you are considering any science course.

Chemical Engineering:

<https://www.ceb.cam.ac.uk/undergraduates/prospective-students/1a-information/reading-list>

Via Engineering: www.i-want-to-study-engineering.org

Via Natural Sciences: <https://isaacphysics.org/>

Chemical Engineering Resources and web forum: www.cheresources.com/content/articles/

Computer Science:

www.cl.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/preparation/

https://www.cs.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/why_oxford/background_reading.html

Oxford's Geomlab: www.cs.ox.ac.uk/geomlab/home.html

The Guardian's list of Comp Sci resources: www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/2012/jan/24/topten-computer-science-teaching-resources

National Cipher Challenge: www.cipher.maths.soton.ac.uk/

TechFest Competitions: www.tic.ac.uk/micromouse/index.asp

Engineering:

<https://www.admissions.eng.cam.ac.uk/information/reading>

www.i-want-to-study-engineering.org

Online library and Engineering web forum: www.engineering.com/

Royal Academy of Engineering: www.raeng.org.uk/

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Institution of Civil Engineers: www.ice.org.uk/

Mathematics:

https://www.maths.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate-admissions/reading_list.pdf

www.maths.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate-admissions/workbook.pdf

<http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/study-here/undergraduate-study/practice-problems>

Millennium Mathematics Project: <http://mmp.maths.org/>

Institute of Mathematics: www.ima.org.uk/

Plus Magazine: <http://plus.maths.org/content/>

Further Maths Support Network: www.fmnetwork.org.uk/#

STEP website: www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/adt/step

STEP preparation: <http://www.physicsandmathstutor.com/step/>

National Cipher Challenge: www.cipher.maths.soton.ac.uk/

Medicine/Veterinary Medicine:

<https://www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/study/medicine/pre-clinical/applying/reading>

<http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/admissions/medicine-reading.pdf>

<https://www.themedicportal.com/prospective-medical-student-reading-list/>

British Medical Association: <http://bma.org.uk/>

Royal Society of Medicine: <https://www.rsm.ac.uk/>

Radio programmes on medical ethics: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007xbtd

Wellcome Trust: www.wellcome.ac.uk/

Human Genome Project: <https://www.genome.gov/10001772/all-about-the--human-genome-project-hgp/>

Oxford Medical School Gazette: www.omsg-online.com/

Institute of Biomedical Science: www.ibms.org/

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Physiological Society: www.physoc.org/

British Veterinary Association: www.bva.co.uk/

Natural Sciences:

Suggested Reading:

<https://www.natsci.tripos.cam.ac.uk/prospective-students/reading>

www.materials.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/booklist.html (Materials Science)

www.bioch.ox.ac.uk/asp/site/index.asp?pageid=422 (Biochemistry)

https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/Introductory_Reading_for_Biomedical_Sciences1.pdf (Biomedical)

https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/Introductory_reading_for_Chemistry.pdf
(Chemistry)

www.dur.ac.uk/natural.sciences/freshers/rlists/es/ (Earth Sciences)

General Interest:

New Scientist Magazine: www.newscientist.com/

Scientific American Magazine: www.scientificamerican.com/

Cambridge Science Podcasts: www.thenakedscientists.com/HTML/podcasts/

Oxford Science Podcasts: <http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/units/mathematical-physical-life-sciences-division>

Oxford Science Blog: www.ox.ac.uk/media/science_blog/

Biological, Biomedical and Life Sciences and Zoology: (See also Medicine/Vet Med)

Wellcome Trust: www.wellcome.ac.uk/

Human Genome Project: <https://www.genome.gov/10001772/all-about-the--human-genome-project-hgp/>

Educational resources at the Natural History Museum: www.nhm.ac.uk/education/index.html

BBC Science programmes: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/science>

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BBC Nature programmes: <https://www.bbc.com/earth/uk>

Institute of Zoology: www.zsl.org/science

Botanical Sciences at Kew: www.kew.org/

Chemistry:

Chemistry World Online: www.rsc.org/chemistryworld/

RSC Journals: <http://pubs.rsc.org/en/Journals?key=Title&value=Current>

RSC membership: www.rsc.org/Membership/Networking/chemnet/

Chemistry World magazine: <https://www.chemistryworld.com/>

Royal Society of Chemistry teaching pages: <http://www.rsc.org/learn-chemistry>

Biochemical Society: www.biochemistry.org/

Physics:

Institute of Physics (including free membership for 16-19 year-olds): www.physics.org/

Isaac Physics: <https://isaacphysics.org/>

British Physics and Astrophysics Olympiad: www.physics.ox.ac.uk/olympiad/

Oxford Astronomy site: www.galaxyzoo.org/

Geological and Materials Sciences:

Geological Society: www.geolsoc.org.uk/index.html

British Geological Survey: www.bgs.ac.uk/

Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining: www.iom3.org/

UK Centre for Materials Education: <http://materials.ac.uk/>

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Psychological and Behavioural Sciences:

<https://www.pbs.tripos.cam.ac.uk/prospective/faq>

https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/EP_PPL_Suggested_Reading_List_June_2013.pdf

<https://web.stanford.edu/group/vista/cgi-bin/wandell/suggested-reading-in-psychology/>

www.dur.ac.uk/natural.sciences/freshers/rlists/psyc/

British Psychological Society: www.bps.org.uk/

The Psychologist Journal: www.thepsychologist.org.uk/

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