

القلائدُ في مَهَارَاتِ صَيِّدِ الفَوَائِدِ

Al-Qalā'idu Fī Mahārāti Ṣayd Al-Fawā'idī

The Ornaments of Skillful Note Taking

By Šhaykh Khālid bin Qāsim Ar-Raddādi

Professor & Former Representative of Library
Affairs at the Islamic University of Madinah

- May Allāh Preserve Him -

Translated by Mahdi Qdeih

1442 / 2021 هـ

Translator's Note

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm

Šhaykḥ Kḥālid, may Allāh preserve him, delivered an [online lecture](#) hosted by the College of Hadith in the Islamic University of Madinah on 3/3/1442H (20/10/2020), which was recorded and later uploaded to Miraath Al-Anbiyaa's online radio station. For the audio of the original lecture (Arabic only) click [here](#). Miraath Al-Anbiyaa also transcribed certain passages from this lecture and shared them as a series of tweets via their official twitter page. This document is a translation of those selected passages. To view the Arabic copy of all the selected passages in one place, please download the PDF version by clicking [here](#).

After reading through these passages, I felt that despite its simplicity, they still carry valuable information and useful advice for anyone who enjoys reading, especially the student of knowledge. Consequently, I believed translating it would be a worthy convenience to be shared with friends, family, and students.

With permission from the Šhaykḥ Kḥālid, I've taken the role of its translation with hopes that it will benefit the Muslims at large. However, I would like to note that any words placed in brackets throughout the translation are not from the original Arabic excerpts, and therefore may not be in the original lecture, but I

added them to enhance fluency of the translation or provide synonyms of a word used or quickly shed light on some context, etc. Similarly, footnotes included in the translation are my personal addition merely to provide sources for whoever may be interested.

I ask Allāh, Glorified and Exalted is He, to keep me sincere in my efforts, grant us all steadfastness upon Islām, and increase us in beneficial knowledge. Āmīn.

Mahdi Qdeih

Jumādā 1 26, 1442

January 10, 2021

(1)

The Importance of Being Sincere When Summarizing Books

There's no doubt that summarizing books and knowing their contents is a matter related to the student of knowledge purifying his intention throughout his reading and any field of knowledge you read about (making it solely for Allah's pleasure). [It also relates to] requesting Allah's assistance to help you with successfully summarizing books, extracting benefits from deep within them, and to facilitate [your] understanding, and memorization.

Likewise, it's upon you to worship Allah abundantly because it is the key to everything. [Also], because this is knowledge that the student of knowledge seeks and should therefore turn to Allah to purify his intention by making it so that he wants knowledge [itself] and wants to benefit from it. [If this is his intention], then this knowledge will return to him and be of use.



(2)

The Importance of Writing Down Useful Information

From among the fruits of reading books is recording useful information [and taking notes], so much so that many scholars have went as far as mentioning that reading books may never yield its expected benefits except by writing this useful information. For this reason, it was said [in a poem]:

الْعِلْمُ صَيْدٌ وَالْكِتَابَةُ قَيْدُهُ قَيْدٌ صِيُودَكَ بِالْحَبَالِ الْوَائِقَةُ

“Knowledge is game, and writing is seizing it, so capture your game with strong ropes.”

Imam An-Nawawi, may Allah have mercy on him, said as he instructs the student to record rare and valuable information that he finds when reading or hears from his teacher, “After researching summarized topics, he should move on to researching extended topics by observing precise analyzation, solid/consistent care, and jotting down what he sees to be rare and valuable information, as well as solving problems he may

encounter while reading, or listening to his teacher. He shouldn't look down upon any useful information he comes across or hears about regardless of the science. Rather, he should urge to write it down, then later devote himself to reviewing what he wrote.”⁽¹⁾



⁽¹⁾ *Al-Majmū'Šarḥ Al-Muḥaḍab* by An-Nawawi (1/38-39) – Dār Al-Fikr's print.

(3)

The Types of Benefits and What Should Be Written Down

The things that a person writes do not exceed one of the following points:

- [The first point:] Thoughts and contemplations that pass through his mind. He should write these down in a personal diary just as many people [typically] do.
- The second point: His past personal experiences that he witnessed throughout his life have also [for sure] taught him many lessons and he should write them down for himself or for those after him.
- The third point: Things he hears from the scholars and the people of virtue and manners, or what he reads in a book.

This is what a person tends to write down.



(4)

When Should You Take Notes?

People, in regard to this, are of different types:

- Some of them stop reading immediately and write down the benefits upon coming across them and this what most people usually to do.
- Others may write the benefits after finishing a chapter or section in the sense that after reading a complete chapter he begins to collect the things he learned from it.
- Others may wait to write down these benefits until after completing the whole book, but he underlines them as he reads or marks them with a checkmark for example.
- Another might follow this same method but doesn't write the benefits after finishing the book right away. Instead, he waits a while until he finds spare time to write them, or when he is bored from reading. With this method, he may remember some information but miss out on some if he forgot to mark or underline them.



(5)

Things to Remember When Reading and Taking Notes

Don't begin reading about a new field of study before knowing its layout and important books as well the ones most suitable for you. The way to that is by asking someone who is already familiar with such.

Every field of study consists of three types of books, in which you should never stop reading about a particular field unless you have read a book from each. Firstly, a book that is considered to be a main source in its field.⁽²⁾ Secondly, a comprehensive book that gathers all its topics. Thirdly, a book that lays out the history of that field of study. For example, the book *Al-Kifāyah* by Al-Kḥaṭīb Al-Baġhdādi is considered a main source in its respective field, and *'Ulūm Al-Ḥadīth* by Ibn Ṣalāḥ

⁽²⁾ In the transcribed copy by Miraath Al-Anbiyaa, it says, *faṣlun fil bāb*, which can translate to a chapter/topic in its field of study. However, after reviewing the audio of the original lecture, I've realized that this is a mistake – a typo perhaps – by the one who transcribed the selected passages. The correction is *aṣlun fil bāb*, which translates to an original or work or main source in its field of study. The example that the Ṣhaykh Kḥālīd uses immediately after makes it obvious that *faṣlun fil bāb* is a mistake because *Al-Kifāyah* by Al-Kḥaṭīb Al-Baġhdādi is a large work that covers multiple chapters in ḥadīth sciences, not just one. See 1:01:30 of audio.

brings together all of the topics of that field. Similarly, *Ar-Risālah* by Imam Ašh-Šhāfi'i in Usūl al-Fiqh, and *Al-Baḥru Al-Muḥīṭ* by Az-Zarkašhi, and a book that discusses the history of Usūl al-Fiqh, and so on.

So, whenever you read about any subject, it is appropriate to never move on to another until after reading these three types of books.



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How to Take Notes

- 1) Divide your notebook according to your academic needs. For example, if you had specifically designated notebooks for taking notes, then divide these notebooks into categories; one for tafsir, one for hadith, one for biographies, etc.
- 2) If you major in a particular field of study, then assign a separate notebook for it and divide it according to the different areas of that specialty.
- 3) Write at the beginning of each benefit a corresponding title. This will help you with easy access when searching for it later on.
- 4) Write the notes completely [exactly the way you read it or heard it] as much as possible as this will make revising the notebook enjoyable and beneficial. Don't summarize pieces of information or hint to the remainder of them [try to write them word for word].
- 5) Write under each note the title of the book you cited it from along with its page number. For example, *Fathul-Bārī*, Volume 7, page 210. [Also], don't use small-sized notebooks because

bigger ones provide more space, have longer lines, and are generally better.

- 6) Assign a special notebook for your favorite lines of poetry and literature.



(7)

The Need for a Pen While Reading

Don't believe anyone who says, "reading with a pen at hand is boring." Don't pay attention to whoever says this. Rather, you shouldn't [ever] read unless you have a pen with you. Without it, the reading itself is deficient, because having a pen allows you to write notes and beneficial information, etc.



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Ways to Extract Benefits from a Book

Extracting benefits is done by one of two ways. One way is by writing down the main ideas/concepts of the book in the margins. We can call this *the summary method*. The other way is by writing notes, useful information, or quotations [exactly as they are] from the book. These two methods could both be used when summarizing a book and for some books only one of the two methods might be appropriate.



(9)

Steps to Summarizing a Book

There are fundamental steps to summarizing a book:

- The first step is called *exposure reading*. Before you summarize the book, you read it through once to discover and pass by its contents. This is a type of reading that the student of knowledge and researcher are in need of and is related to the topic of reading and its various methods.
- The second step represents distinguishing between the important concepts outlined in the first step and unnecessary information or things that could be omitted.
- The third step is when the writing of the summary is actually completed by leaving the original text aside and writing the summary by covering all aspects of the idea/concept.
- The fourth step is to compare the summary with the original text after its completion so the correctness of the summary can be confirmed, and any adequate corrections can be made.



(10)

Principles of a Good Summary

There are four main principles to a good summary:

- The first principle is *deleting* any sentences that don't contribute to understanding the original text.
- The second principle is *merging* a sentence with other sentences so that they form understandable clauses and draw conclusions. Simply put, merging words of one sentence or two sentences together.
- The third principle is *constructing* a [new] sentence from other sentences and replacing them with it. It is necessary that the [newly] constructed sentence draws the same conclusion as the sentences that were deleted.
- The fourth principle is *generalizing*, [which means] substituting a group of sentences with one sentence that carries all the same meanings that the substituted ones conveyed.



(11)

Benefits of Summarizing Books

There are numerous benefits to summarizing books. We can briefly mention them in the following:

- 1) The reader gains the ability to comprehend and remain focused, as well as collecting the important elements of a topic just by narrowing down the main concepts.
- 2) Deleting extra, filler, and repeating information, as well as limiting the content to what the one summarizing considers to be from the foundations of the field of study. [This is all] to make it possible for the researcher to recall them and facilitate comprehending them.
- 3) Summarizing is a practical exercise for intensive writing and strengthening writing skills so he [(the one summarizing)] obtains a strong skillset in summarizing by using fewer words to convey a lot of meanings.
- 4) An organized retrieval of information that the reader stores when reading the book before summarizing, as well as testing his comprehension capabilities.
- 5) In-depth observations of the writer and reader in the summarized topics.

- 6) Easily being able to of revise and recall the contents of the book and its topics.
- 7) Summarizing contributes to forming the student's educational skills, unique paraphrasing, and personal efforts that grant him reliability and academic succession.
- 8) Summarizing is very important during seminars, conferences, and academic research.



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Conditions of Summarizing a Book

There are two conditions:

- [The first is] maintaining the objective of the original author otherwise it is a distortion and corruption of the text.
- The second condition is making it known when there's additional information [from the one summarizing]. If you want to add something you make it clear that it is not from the original text. Whoever wants to add something to the original text, he brings attention to that, as that was the practice of the scholars.



(13)

Academic Procedures When Summarizing Books

Don't summarize a book unless it meets the following characteristics:

- It's considered a source/reference in its field.
- It should be free of most criticism, this way you don't waste your time summarizing a largely criticized work.
- It's filled with many scholarly benefits.
- [It's] well organized.
- Take 10 minutes after reading the book for the first time to summarize the main concepts in your head.
- Don't provide much commentary for the book as that defies the purpose [of a summary]. Just write the clear and important comments and don't provide commentary for everything in the book.
- Rate the book at the conclusion of every book. For example, write *excellent book*, or *bad*, or *good but it lacks such and such*. Be accustomed to rating books to obtain this skill.

- Practice using different colored pens as this will motivate you when referring back to your summary again. You can also use highlighters to help achieve this. For example, yellow is for this, red is for a mistake, green is for an explanation. Make it unique to yourself.
- Write large and clear so that anyone can read your handwriting.
- Imagine you are going to publish your summary as that calls for perfection.
- When summarizing, focus on the author's objectives and don't go beyond them. You will sometimes find commentary, elongations, and filler information so try avoiding that by using paraphrasing of your own that corresponds with the original book.
- Stay away from the author's redundancy while also guessing its purpose because sometimes it could be for a special reason or something important.



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Operational Principles for Summarizing Books

Summarizing books has three methodological principles that are required to observe:

- Correct understanding.
- Good delivery.
- Correct objective.

The first principle: a correct understanding will safeguard you from wrong interpretations and so that the summary is not based on something the author didn't originally intend. Having a wrong understanding is the greatest flaw in this situation.

The second principle: a good delivery limits your mistakes in conveying the original objective of the author. Having a correct understanding is not enough until it is linked with a delivery that carries its meanings without any additions nor subtractions. The eloquence of the tongue is a great advantage because it assists the person in correct understanding, great choice of

meanings, and scoring right in the delivery without losing or wasting anything.

The third principle: having a correct objective protects from distorting the original intent of the author normally caused by adding or taking away or altering the wording in a way that changes the meaning to other than what the author wants, [which is usually what] the one summarizing feels corresponds more with his own views.⁽³⁾



⁽³⁾ The Šhaykh Khālid, may Allāh preserve him, says in the original lecture, which can translate to mean, “most errors/flaws found in summaries are a result of failure to fulfill this principle.” See 29:25 of audio.