

Leadership Development Reading List

Leaders read. As Former Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis stated, “If you haven’t read hundreds of books, you are functionally illiterate, and you will be incompetent, because your personal experiences alone aren’t broad enough to sustain you.” To that end, there is no limit to the number of reading lists available to leaders. Each of the Service Chiefs has a reading list that is updated every few years and most professional organizations to which you each aspire routinely publishes reading recommendations.

This reading list is not intended to replace or replicate those excellent resources. Instead, this list captures the recommendations of Commandant’s Staff and ROTC Cadre for some key reads that should start you on your path to being a leader who reads. The name of the staff member recommending the book is also included so you can reach out and discuss with them why they think that book is valuable to your professional development.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive or inclusive. If none of the books included herein spark your interest, then read something else. If you’ve read everything on this list and desire more, there are links at the end of the list to the Service Chiefs (and other) comprehensive reading lists. So regardless of what you are reading to develop your leadership skills, be reading!

There are many ways to consume these texts – paper books, eBooks, or audiobooks – consume them in the manner the works best for you. We also recognize that reading books is not the only way to absorb this material, so after the book list, we have included some podcasts and videos/movies that provide valuable lessons for aspiring leaders.

Books

Leadership

Black Box Thinking: The Surprising Truth About Success by Matthew Syed (CMDRCM Curtis)

Have a Nice Conflict: How to Find Success and Satisfaction in the Most Unlikely Places by Tim Scudder, Michael Patterson, and Kent Mitchell (CMDRCM Curtis)

Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us by Seth Godin (CMDRCM Curtis)

Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don’t by Simon Sinek (Col Lowe)

Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action by Simon Sinek (Maj Gen Fullhart)

Turn the Ship Around!: A True Story of Turning Followers into Leaders by L. David Marquet (Col Lowe)

Mastering the Art of Command: Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and Victory in the Pacific by Trent Hone (CAPT McGrath)

Hesselbein on Leadership by Frances Hesselbein (Maj Gen Fullhart)

The 5 Levels of Leadership: Proven Steps to Maximize Your Potential by John Maxwell (Maj Gen Fullhart)

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You by John Maxwell (Maj Gen Fullhart)

American Generalship: Character Is Everything: The Art of Command by Edgar F. Puryear Jr. (Maj Gen Fullhart)

Fighting Talk: Forty Maxims on War, Peace, and Strategy by Colin Gray (Col Shelton)

Military History

Neptune's Inferno: The U.S. Navy at Guadalcanal by James D. Hornfischer (CAPT McGrath)

An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943, Volume One of the Liberation Trilogy by Rick Atkinson (CAPT McGrath)

Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany by Donald L. Miller (Lt Col Russell)

Rogue Heroes: The History of the SAS (Britain's Secret Special Forces Unit That Sabotaged the Nazis and Changed the Nature of War) by Ben McIntyre (LTC Mariger)

Learning War: The Evolution of Fighting Doctrine in the U.S. Navy, 1898–1945 by Trent Hone (CAPT McGrath)

We Were Soldiers Once...and Young: Ia Drang—The Battle That Changed the War in Vietnam by Harold Moore and Joseph Galloway (CAPT McGrath)

Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War by Mark Bowden (CAPT McGrath)

Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton by Martin van Creveld (Col Shelton)

American Diplomacy by George Kennan (Col Shelton)

Productivity

Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity by David Allen (Maj Gen Fullhart)

The Effective Executive: The Definitive Guide to Getting the Right Things Done by Peter Drucker (Maj Gen Fullhart)

The Goal: A Process of Ongoing Improvement by Eliyahu Goldratt (Maj Gen Fullhart)

Failing Forward: Turning Mistakes into Stepping Stones for Success by John Maxwell (Maj Gen Fullhart)

Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World by David Epstein (CAPT McGrath)

The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups by Daniel Coyle (Col Shelton)

Fiction

Once an Eagle by Anton Myrer (Lt Col Sheets)

Red Storm Rising by Tom Clancy (CAPT McGrath)

Ghost Fleet: A Novel of the Next World War by P.W. Singer & August Cole (CAPT McGrath)

All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque (Col Shelton)

Gates of Fire by Stephen Pressfield (Col Shelton)

Podcasts

[Radio Stockdale](#)
[Jocko Podcast](#)
[The Green Notebook](#)
[Planet Money](#)

[Hidden Brain](#)
[Modern War Institute](#)
[Sea Control](#)
[Air University Press](#)

Movies

We Were Soldiers
Hunt for Red October
Blackhawk Down
Full Metal Jacket
Saving Private Ryan
Heartbreak Ridge
Devotion

Hacksaw Ridge
Red Tails
Greyhound
Glory
Gettysburg
Hidden Figures
Apollo 13

Video Series

Band of Brothers
Masters of the Air (once released)

The Pacific
Ted Lasso

Internet Video Series

[World War Two](#)
[CrashCourse](#)

[The Great War](#)
[TED Talks](#)

Service Chiefs' Reading Lists

[Chief of Staff of the Air Force](#)
[Chief of Staff of the Army](#)
[Chief of Naval Operations](#)
[Commandant of the Marine Corps](#)
[Commandant of the Coast Guard](#)
[Chief of Staff of the Space Force](#)

[Army ROTC New River Battalion](#)