

## One of my Lifelong Habits is Hard to Change

Breaking the back of a new book is painful. I can't do it under any circumstance. I will read with the pages not fully opened and my hands sore rather than commit that crime.

It's me, though.

I keep quiet and wince ever so slightly when I see someone else pull back the cover of a paperback all the way in an airport lounge like the pain from removing a bandage from a hairy arm. It is even harder to watch if the person flattens his work down over and over, too, feeling completely satisfied while I cringe in my seat.

Books are my friends, and I imagine their spines suffering.

Each of us has our ways. I make no judgement here.

There is a longtime friend of mine that is fine with that, and declares that the book is officially hers when she breaks it in. She writes in the margins, too, when she engages and makes the material personal. Her books proudly stay on her shelves, and she is one of those sturdy readers who will pick up one and read again.

On the other hand, I have a chain of acquaintances that I pass along most of my books to keep them in circulation. Once I have released them, I don't have any expectations about their condition. That's why I usually don't ask to have them returned to me, for I might be disappointed in their looks.

Somehow it got drilled in my head as a youngster to take care of my possessions, and one of them was books. I took it seriously and even though I was an avid reader, you might not know from the pristine condition of my collection. I handled each book with loving care, and oh, the time my sticky fingers left its impressions on several pages of my *Little House on the Prairie* book, I was distraught to no end.

Turning down pages is another issue with me, too. I'll use a bookmark first and foremost. A scrap of paper will do in an emergency.

In college when I had permission to go into the rare book collection, I loved that I had to wear a pair of white gloves to search over the pages

for some obscure historical fact that would become part of a term paper under the watchful eyes of the desk librarian.

I have the identical feelings about books that I borrow from the library. Thankfully, those books are prepared by the staff for heavy use by patrons.

No doubt I am not alone with my thoughts, and I will hear about it from the other point of view as well.