

BOOKS: *Handle with care*

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A new trend in the world of literature is the availability of bookstores which have their own reading areas. Essentially, you can take a book off their shelves, and sit down at your leisure and read to your heart's content.

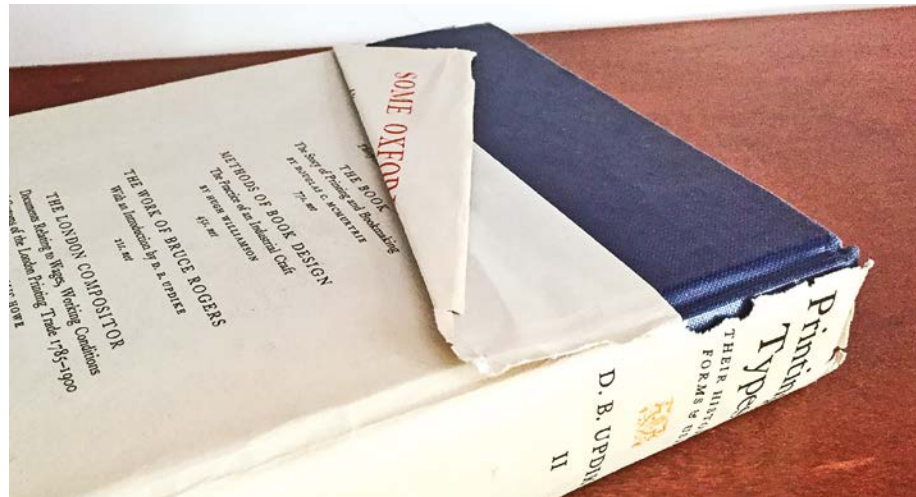
With more of these types of book stores popping up in Bangladesh, a point that comes to mind is how to handle books. It doesn't just have to apply to books you read in the store, in fact, it would be useful to follow these unspoken rules when handling your own personal collection.

As pompous as this might sound, book handling etiquettes are a basic form of respect, mostly in the case of books you are only reading in the store, and are yet to purchase. These are copies that will, in the future, be purchased by someone else. Therefore, treating it with care and respect is a basic courtesy.

That's why I want to introduce everyone to some common book handling etiquettes that you should familiarise yourself with for future reference.

BE GENTLE

Don't just take books out of their shelves



or return them to their original spots carefully. You might end up damaging both the one you took, as well as its neighbour. Treat them with care and caution. Don't just yank it out off its place on a shelf or a pile with no concern.

OPEN CAREFULLY

If you're one of those people that likes to spread open a book over a table and read to your heart's content, more power to you. But buy the book first, then do

whatever you want with it. And don't let another bibliophile know what you're doing. Doing so usually damages the spine, and doing that to a book someone else might purchase is just mean.

DON'T EAT AND READ

These bookstores sometimes have their own cafeteria that serves tea/coffee and snacks. This might lead you to grab a *shingara* and eat while you read the borrowed book. However, the oil residue on your

hands will damage the pages and the cover of the book in question. And let's not begin to talk about coffee stains on a page.

BENDING IS BAD

Do not, under any circumstance, bend the cover. Anyone buying the book will usually look at the condition of the cover first. If they wanted something with a damaged cover, they'd go to Nilkhet and buy a secondhand book instead of paying a premium for a brand new book with creases all over the cover. Sometimes, damaged books get stuck in stores forever as no one wants to buy them.

You might ask why you should be careful when handling a few hundred printed pages bound together. But it's a piece of art. Someone put their heart and soul into writing their book and getting it published, and someone out there will someday pay good money to buy it.

So the least you could do is be considerate enough to handle the book with care, mostly when you're getting the privilege of reading it for free.

Aaqib is stuck in an existential crisis loop. Send help at aaqibhasib94@gmail.com

GROWING CACTI INDOORS

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It is undeniable that we all wanted to own a houseplant at some point in our lives. I mean, why not? It makes great room décor. It gives you oxygen in return for some love and care and it's green! Green relaxes our retinas and calms our nerves. The colour green, AKA wavelengths of around 540, is a well-perceived colour to humans. And we all need some green in our lives. Pinterest, with its jaw-dropping DIYs has never failed at giving us hope to breathe life into the dream of a tiny green kingdom. But often, many of us ditch the dream blaming a lack for the knack. But is it, though?

A cactus makes the perfect houseplant owing to its low maintenance and robust nature. Read on to find your flaws and jump-start your green thumbs.

ID your cacti: Before nose-diving into buying the plant, know your plant.

Ask the seller. Or, use plant identification apps to find more about the plant. Knowing about its origin will give you a good idea on its needs. Recreate those conditions for it to bloom. Start with beginner cacti and slowly move on to pro-level planter bowls which feature a great variety of beauties in one pot.

To water or not water: The leading cause of cacti death is overwatering. Water them sparingly and only when the soil is dry or the cactus looks shriveled. Too much water causes roots to rot and kills them quickly.

Find the sun: Your cactus can live without water but not the sun. Place it on the windowsill or close to the rays during the growing months. However, be wary of sunburn. Burns range from whitish spots to dark brown patches. If your plant has been sitting in the store for a while, gradually bring it out to full sun. Move it deeper in the house during winter when they shift to dormancy.



Never force them to grow at this period.

Watch them grow: Cactus being so low-maintenance does not imply you'll just leave it there. Be observant. Look for signs. See if it's bending too much for light. Then reposition it for optimal

exposure. If the top is too thin, this also means inadequate sunlight. See if it's too soft; it might be rotting. Watch out for pests and fungal infections. Dust it regularly with a small brush. Give it the proper attention it deserves. It, after all, is prolonging your life with wholesome oxygen.

Toil at the soil: Soil matters, a lot. Cacti require dry, well-drained soil. Use a specialist cacti mix unlike typical plant mix which retain water very well. The mix is said to be ideal if it gets dry the next day after watering. Occasionally, nourish with fertilizers.

Drain, drain, drain: Drainage is top priority. Clay pots are highly recommended as they are porous and control moisture and aeration well. Poke a few drainage holes, too. Try adding pumice stone to the soil mix; it absorbs excess water and improves aeration.

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