

Study Skills Services 323 Oswald Building 246-6537



Reading Textbooks

As a college student, you've probably realized that much of your schoolwork involves reading. You've probably also noticed that reading a text-book is much more difficult than reading your favorite magazine. When you read a magazine for fun you relax; but the opposite is the case when you read a text for class — you need to pay attention and focus. The mistake most students make with textbook reading assignments is to schedule a large block of time to sit down and read non-stop until they have completed the assignment. Unfortunately, when they finish, they understand and remember very little of what they read. In order to increase your reading comprehension and retention, you must become an <u>active</u> reader. Many students have found that the SQ3R reading strategy helps them recall text information.

SQ3R

The SQ3R system is a multi-layered reading approach that can help you make the best of your reading time. It involves five steps: **S**urvey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite and **R**eview. Using the SQ3R system will help you increase your reading speed, keep your mind from wandering, learn the material for class, and make studying for tests more efficient.

Survey:

The first thing to do when you are assigned a chapter in a textbook is to survey it. The purpose of surveying is to get yourself interested in what you are about to read. Surveying also gives you the opportunity to consider what you already know about the topic and to relate that to the new information you will be reading.



How to Survey:

- Read the chapter title. What does it mean? What do you already know about the topic?
- Read any objectives and/or vocabulary words at the beginning of the chapter.
- Read the introduction or first paragraph. The main idea of the chapter is usually found there.
- Read the headings and subheadings of the rest of the chapter.
- Read the first paragraph under each heading. This gives you an overview of each section.
- Look at the pictures, graphs, charts, etc. They emphasize main points and provide summaries.
- Read the summary. This gives main points or conclusions.

Question: Asking yourself questions about what you are reading will help you stay focused. These questions give you a purpose in your reading. That is, you are now reading to find the answers to your questions. Reading to find answers arouses your curiosity and improves comprehension.

How to Question:

- Many textbooks provide questions at the beginning or end of the chapter. If no questions are provided, make up your own. Try looking for the who, what, when, where, why, and how in each section.
- Write your questions on index cards.

Read:

For many students, the goal of reading is simply to get finished. The goal of an active reader should be to learn something. The third step in being an active reader is to answer your questions as you read.

How to read:

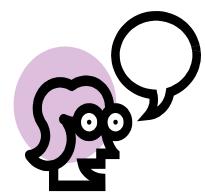
- Read one section at a time.
- Read to find answers to your questions. As you find answers, write them on the back of your index cards.
- Use the following guidelines to make notations in your text:
 - Read a paragraph or section completely before marking anything.
 - Number lists, reasons, or other items that occur in a series.
 - Identify important terms, dates, phrases, names, etc.
 - Put a question mark beside anything you don't understand.
 - Mark information that your instructor emphasizes with a star or asterisk.
 - Be selective with your markings. Too much defeats the purpose.

Recite:

After you finish reading a section, see if you can recite it. That is, check your understanding of the section.

How to Recite:

- Briefly answer the questions you wrote down for that section. Recite answers in your own words.
- See if you can summarize in a few words what the section was about.
- If you cannot figure out what the section was about, go back and look over it again.
 If it still puzzles you, mark it with a "?" to remind yourself to ask your instructor or another student about it later.



Keep repeating the Question, Read, Recite steps until you are finished with the reading assignment.

Review:

After you have finished with the entire reading assignment, check to make sure you understand what you have read by reviewing the material. In this step, you want to see how the information relates and begin studying for recall (i.e., moving the information from short-term to long-term memory).

How to Review:

- Think back over what you have read.
- Look over any notes you made from the assignment.
- Write a brief summary of the whole reading assignment.
- Can you answer all of your questions?
- If provided, look at the objectives of the chapter. Did you meet all of them?

Other Tips for Reading Textbooks

- Make an outline of the chapter. This can be used later in class for taking notes.
- Review reading assignments within 24 hours. We forget up to 80% of what we read within 24 hours.
- Read it out loud. Our recall of information increases when we hear it as well as see
 it.
- Read with a dictionary close by. Look up any words that are unfamiliar.
- It is not necessary to read the whole assignment in one sitting. Break it up into chunks. Read a few pages and take a short break.

