

Make the Most of Your Reading with SQ3R

If you were setting a physical goal for yourself—like wanting to run in a 5K race—you would break down your goal into smaller steps. The first week, you might run one kilometer a day. The next week, you would add a second kilometer. Finally, you would work your way up to running five kilometers. Breaking your goal into steps would lead to success.

You will be more successful reading a difficult or long text if you break the process into steps. Instead of reading a section of your textbook and wondering, “What was that about? Which facts are important? What am I supposed to remember?” you can take steps to master the text.

The SQ3R reading strategy can help you break learning into chunks so that you can understand it and remember it more easily. This method is the granddaddy of study methods; it was invented in 1941, and has been used for many years. Because it actively engages your mind before, during, and after you read, you will comprehend and remember more—and make the most of your study time.

SQ3R stands for **Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review**. You have learned how to do many of these steps as before- or during-reading strategies.

Survey: First, **survey** what you are going to read. To survey means to view, skim over, or examine. By predicting what you will find in the text, you will remember more details.

- Look over the text by previewing the headings, illustrations or pictures. What do they say?
- What does the title say?
- What do I know about this subject?
- What do I want to know?
- Read the first paragraph. Then read the last paragraph or summary.



Question: If you ask yourself questions about the text, you will look for—and remember—answers.



- Make the title into a question. Write it in your notebook. This becomes your purpose for reading.
- Are there questions at the end of the chapter or section? Read them.
- Write down any questions that surface as you read.
- Turn headings and subheadings into questions.
- Jot down any unfamiliar vocabulary words.

Read: Be an active reader!

- Try to find the answers to your questions.
- Annotate (if possible) with a highlighter or pencil when you find answers to your questions. If you cannot annotate the text you are reading, jot down notes in your notebook.
- Use context clues to figure out unfamiliar words. If you don't understand a passage, write down your questions.
- Adjust your speed as you read. If the information is not important, speed up. If it is important, or you don't understand it, slow down.



Recite: Talk to yourself about what you've read. (Yes, it is okay to talk to yourself. But if you are using the method during class, try to talk to yourself in your head rather than out loud!)



- Close your eyes and think about what you've read. Summarize.
- Try to answer the questions you had before reading. Reread to answer your questions.
- Test your understanding. What were the main points?

Review: Look back over the text to make sure you understand the main points.

- Have you answered your purpose for reading? Summarize information by discussing it with a partner, writing a summary, or creating a graphic organizer.
- Think or write about how this information can apply to your life.
- Review your notes within 24 hours, and again a few days later. You will remember much, much more if you do this! Don't wait until the night before a test to cram!

