

Academic Reading/Learning using SQ3R

SQ3R is a reading/learning strategy formed from its letters:

Survey! Question! Read! Recite! Review!

As a reading and studying system, it helps to build a framework to understand your reading assignment/thesis and source materials such as journal articles. It is extremely effective for both comprehension and memory retention as it actively involves the reader.

Before you actually read, start by taking five minutes to **Survey** the material to anticipate what the materials are about.

- Briefly check the title, headings, and subheadings to understand the author's organisational pattern of ideas to be discussed
- Scan all visual material and captions under pictures, charts, graphs or maps
- Read introductory, concluding and summary paragraphs

As you survey the material, **Question** what you are reading and write them down. This allows you to read materials for a specific purpose.

- Create interest in the material as you read by asking, "What are the main points of the paragraph?"
- Turn the title, headings, and/or subheadings into questions
- Read questions at the end of the chapters or after each subheading
- Ask yourself, "What did my lecturer say about this section or subject when it was assigned/discussed?"
- Ask yourself, "What do I already know about this subject?"

Then, it is time to **Read** your materials actively for meaning. The more active you are in the reading process, the more you will retain.

- Look for answers to the questions you first raised
- Go through paragraphs before underlining, then underline key words and phrases to help you recall the main points
- Be selective; you don't want to highlight non-important points or miss anything that can help your comprehension
- Answer questions at the beginning or end of chapters or study guides
- Reread captions under pictures, graphs
- Note all the underlined, italicised, bold printed words or phrases
- Read only a section at a time and recite after each section
- Reduce your speed for difficult passages
- Stop and reread parts which are not clear
- Summarise main concepts in your own words in the margins

After every few pages or a section, close your book/turn over your notes and **Recite** aloud the main points to the questions you posed in Step 2. Don't be frustrated, this takes more time, but the information will be clearer in your mind.

- Orally ask yourself questions about what you have just read, or summarise, in your own words, what you read. Verify your answer by checking the text
- Take notes from the text but write the information in your own words
- Take as much time as you need to answer your questions
- Underline or highlight important points you've just read
- Reciting: The more senses you use, the more likely you are to remember what you read: Seeing, saying, hearing, writing!

Finally, **Review** the materials every so often to fix the material in your mind. This step is an ongoing process. Numerous reviews are a lot more effective than trying to cram information in one night before an exam or submission or when completing an assignment or your thesis.

Some critical questions you could use (See Step 2):

What is the general topic?	
What is the main issue or problem statement?	
What is the conclusion?	
What are reasons for their conclusion?	
How is this conclusion related to your assignment topic or subject area?	
What have they not considered?	
What suggestions can you offer as a way forward?	

Adapted from: Robinson, Francis Pleasant. *Effective Study*. 4th ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1970

Ruth Sunda & Kyrene de las Brisas: [Bloom's Critical Thinking/Questioning Strategies](#)

Compiled by the FHS Writing Lab, 2024.