



SQ4R: A Classic Method for Studying Texts

Introduction

We call this method a classic because students have found it useful since the early 60's. It's probably worth your time to try all the steps at first, and then choose and apply only those that work effectively for each of your course texts. Although using the SQ4R method may seem time consuming at first, once you know the steps the process takes only a few minutes.

S = Survey

Before you crack open your book to page one and dive in, take a few minutes to read the preface and introduction to the text, and browse through the table of contents and the index. This will tell you the main topics that the book will cover, the author's particular approach to the subject (i.e., why he/she wrote another text on the subject when there are probably twenty on the market), and what the basic organizational structure will be.

A similar process is repeated before each chapter. Read all the titles and subtitles, study any pictures, charts or graphs, and, if there are any, read the summary at the end of the chapter and any study questions. Surveying a chapter in this way gives you the "big picture," a framework of the main ideas which will help to hold the details together later.

Q = Question

Before beginning to read, take the subtitle of the section (or the first sentence of a paragraph) and turn it into a question. For example, if you're reading part of a chapter called "Functions of the Spinal Cord," ask yourself, "What are the functions of the spinal cord?"

R#1 = Read

You then read, not passively sliding your eyes over the words, but actively engaging the text, trying to find the answer to your question. Be cautious, however, that you don't end up skimming for the answer to your question and missing other important information.





R#2 = Respond

Once you've read the section, close the textbook and answer your question, either orally or on paper, *in your own words*. If you can't answer the question, you should reread that section until you can. If, after several tries, you still can't answer your question, go on to the next few sections and see if things become clearer. You may find that you need to change your question. For example, you may have first posed the question, "What is the Treaty of Versailles?" for the subtitle "The Treaty of Versailles," but, after reading the section, you may find that a better question is, "Why was the Treaty of Versailles created?" If changing your question doesn't help clarify the reading, it's time to get some help. Your instructor or TA are good places to start, or Learning Services in the Learning Commons can also help with effective reading strategies.

R#3 = Record

Once you've understood the material and can summarize it in your own words, the next step is to record the information in some way. Some common methods are to highlight and/or mark the text, or take notes, or some combination of both. Whichever method or combination of methods you choose (some pros and cons are summarized next), it's critical to remember to read and understand the material *first*, and then go back and record.

Highlighting

The Pros:

- takes less time than note taking
- charts and graphs from text readily available

The Cons:

- very easy to do badly; can fool you into thinking you're learning material when what you're really doing is colouring
- tendency to mark too much to avoid missing something important; experts say highlight 10 15%; students usually highlight 70 80%
- because fragments of sentences are highlighted, tendency is to read whole sentence for complete meaning and so most of the book ends up being re-read
- necessary to study for tests from heavy, clumsy textbook
- difficult to integrate with lecture notes
- textbook ends up looking very used and reduces resale value

Notetaking

The Pros:





- because it's time consuming, encourages you to be concise and more selective of important information
- information is in point form but still grammatically complete
- provides a portable, easy-to-manage study tool - text not often needed for studying
- condensed study notes can be made in margins as you go, saving time when preparing for exams
- easy to integrate text and lecture notes if done on looseleaf paper

The Cons:

- time-consuming
- tendency to copy text rather than take notes in your own words

R#4 = Review

In courses where there is a lot of factual material to remember, a regular review period (usually once a week) can be a very effective strategy for retaining information. Integrating a weekly review period into your study routine will help you remember more of the information longer, thereby changing the nature of the studying done at exam time. Rather than relearning material that has been forgotten because you haven't looked at it since reading it or writing it down, preparing for an exam can include a review of familiar material and rehearsal strategies like trying old exams.

The secret to making regular review periods effective is to start *from the beginning* of the course in each review session. The volume of material to review increases as the semester progresses, but the amount of time needed to review older material decreases. After you've reviewed the first week's material a few times, it will take only minutes to skim over it and recall the key points.

Survey Question Read Recite Relate Revise

SQ4R method improves both comprehension and grades.

<p>Before you read, <u>S</u>urvey the chapter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The title, headings, and subheadings. • Captions under pictures, charts, graphs or maps. • Review questions or teacher-made study guides.
--	---





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory and concluding paragraphs. • Summary. • Try to get an overview of what lies ahead.
<p><i>Question while you are surveying</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 instructor say about this chapter or subject when it was assigned?" • Ask yourself, "What do I already know about this subject?" • Example, the heading "Stages of Sleep" might lead you to ask: "Is there more than one stage of sleep?" What are they and how do they differ?" Asking questions helps you read with a purpose. <p>Note: If it is helpful to you, <u>write</u> out these questions for consideration. This variation is called SQW4R</p>
<p>When you begin to <u>Read</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for answers to the questions you first raised. • Answer questions at the beginning or end of chapters or study guides. • Reread captions under pictures, graphs, etc. • Note all the underlined, italicized, bold printed words or phrases. • Study graphic aids. • Reduce your speed for difficult passages. • Stop and reread parts which are not clear. • Read only a section at a time and recite after each section.
<p><u>Recite</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orally ask yourself questions about what you have just read and/or summarize in your own words.





<p>read a section:</p>	<p>what you read.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take notes from the text but write the information in your own words. • Underline/highlight important points you've just read. • Use the method of recitation which best suits your particular learning style. • Remember to look for answers as you read and to recite or take notes before moving on. • Recite key terms and concepts.
<p><u>Relate</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is easier to remember ideas that are personally meaningful. • When you study a chapter, try to link new facts, terms, and concepts with information you already know.
<p><u>Review</u> an ongoing process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you're done reading, skim back over the chapter, or read your notes. Then check your memory by reciting and quizzing yourself again. • Make frequent review a key part of your study habits.





The SQ3R Reading Method

Name _____

Teacher: _____

Date _____

Subject: _____

Survey: *Record important titles and subtitles from work.*

Question: *Write "Who, What, When, Where, and Why" questions from main topics.*

Read: *Write answers to questions from above.*

Recite: *Record key facts and phrases as needed for each question.*





Review:

Create a summary paragraph for each question.





