



Effective Reading

SQ3R Method

- The most effective reading method is often determined by identifying the purpose for the reading. For example, we often skim email in order to determine if it is important and worth reading. Pleasure reading is slower, enabling the reader to enjoy the imagery and story line. The purpose of **academic reading** is to identify and remember the most important information so that you can use it in a test situation or as an argument in a paper. The SQ3R method is a very effective academic reading method.

1. Survey

- Survey the chapter quickly. This is done by looking at the sections of the chapter—the headings, important definitions and anything that is in italics or in bold print. This provides an overview of the flow of ideas and the arguments that the author is presenting in the chapter.

2. Question

- Now that you know what is discussed in the chapter, write down some questions that you hope will be answered in the reading. These could be questions of a personal nature or questions that are related to learning from the lectures. As you read you will actively look for answers to these questions. This will keep your mind awake and on track.

3. Read (to understand)

- This reading is the most thorough of the three. Keep in mind that the goal is to identify and remember the most important information. If there are sections that are not important you may choose to skim them. However, you need to take as much time as is needed to understand the key concepts and relationships between them.
- Make a notation when you think you have identified an important idea or if you have found an answer to one of the questions. Write comments in the margins. (Personal ideas, relationships, questions, where you agree or disagree.)



4. Read (to make notes)

- Now that you understand the chapter, go back and highlight the important passages. Highlight only the key concepts so that you can find them when you study for a test.
- The reason you don't do this earlier is because often when we highlight we fail to take the time to understand the material. In addition, many times we highlight too much and then we can't find the key ideas in the passage.

5. Read (to review)

- This time you reread the most important parts to ensure that you understand them completely.
- Now is a great time to make a one page, bullet format set of study notes.
- The reason you do this is to begin to move information from short-term to long-term memory.

Frequency of contact—why this works

- Why do you remember a friend's name who you have not seen in a month, but forget the name of a person you met yesterday? The answer is usually summed up in the phrase "frequency of contact". We remember people who we have seen frequently, particularly if we have a personal relationship with them.
- Similarly, memory of academic information is also retained in our long-term memory when we have frequent contact with the information and use it in a meaningful way.
- SQ3R ensures that you see the information several times.

3 R's

- The three R's typically are Read, Recite and Review. I have adapted these sections to 3 types of reading. It takes some extra time but it is worthwhile since this method of reading helps move information from short-term to long-term memory.
- For more help contact the Learning Resource Centre.

