

SQ3R

Remember more from your textbook reading

Objectives: In this lesson you will learn

- The differences between reading a textbook systematically (step-by-step) and non-systematically.
- How to use the SQ3R method to remember and understand more while reading a textbook.

Directions: Read through each of the sections. At times you will be asked to answer practice questions and at the end there will be a short quiz. Try to answer each of the questions before looking at the feedback section. Write your answers in the space provided.

Reading Textbooks – *it's easier than you think.*

What are the differences between textbooks and novels?

Novels tell a story, textbooks give information. Textbooks use items other than just words like graphs, pictures, and tables. Novels usually tell the story only through words. Textbooks you read for *understanding* and remembering. Novels you read for *enjoyment* and the flow of the story.

*What is the difference when a person **reads** a textbook versus reading a novel?*

*Read each statement and **circle** whether it is true or false.*

- True or False:** People generally use a highlighter with a textbook and not with a novel.
- True or False:** People naturally ask questions about what is happening in the novel, but they don't ask questions when reading a textbook.
- True or False:** When reading a novel or textbook, one time through from start to finish is always sufficient.
- True or False:** In reading a textbook, students look over the whole chapter first, read, then paraphrase or write down what they learned. Looking over a whole novel before reading, would spoil it.

Feedback

- a. *True*, you don't use a highlighter with a novel. (Unless you need to mark something interesting.)
- b. *False*, people naturally ask questions about what they are reading in a novel, (such as predicting what will happen) but they might not ask questions when reading a textbook. Asking questions while reading a textbook gives you something to look for and helps you understand what the chapter is about.
- c. *False*, when reading a textbook you may need to read a passage or a chapter two, three, or more times to understand the information. Reading textbooks and novels more than once improves your comprehension or understanding and your reading skills.
- d. *True*, in reading a textbook it is important to look over the whole chapter before you read (surveying/previewing). However, surveying is much more than glancing at the whole chapter. It includes reading specific parts of the chapter such as the title, introduction and summary to find the main idea. Then while reading the passage it is easier to identify what is important and what is not.

As you can see, reading a textbook is very different than reading a novel.

Why is it important to read a textbook in a systematic way?

If you consider the novels, newspapers, magazines or other non-technical reading materials that you have read, they all have a story to tell. Textbooks and other technical materials, focus more on presenting information than telling a story. By using a *systematic approach* (planning, sorting, organizing), you will be able to find the information you need, and remember more of what you read.

Let's look at two examples of college students and how they approach reading a textbook. Look for systematic and non-systematic methods of textbook reading.

Stewart doesn't enjoy reading textbooks, but he knows that if he can understand the main ideas and find the information he needs for his quiz he will do well. Stewart likes to study where it is quiet, so he doesn't get distracted and have to spend more time than he needs too. He starts by looking over the entire chapter reading the introduction and summary. Instead of starting at the beginning of the chapter Stewart reads a section that he doesn't know that much about. He makes notes off to the side of the page and underlines key words or concepts after reading a paragraph. Before reading, Stewart tries to predict what will be in each section by asking questions. He then reads looking for answers to his questions and writes them down. After reading Stewart writes a short summary of what he read. During the next few days he reviews what he read to help him get ready for his quiz.

Harry likes to read, but hates reading textbooks. He finds them boring and dull, not to mention he falls asleep before he can get through a chapter. Because he keeps falling asleep, he tries to read while watching television, listening to music, he finally goes to the student union building to study. Harry reads a textbook by starting at the first of the chapter until he finishes the whole chapter. Highlighter in hand, he marks everything in the chapter he finds interesting. Harry occasionally comes to a word that he doesn't know. Instead of looking them up in a dictionary, Harry keeps going hoping that he will understand them after reading the whole paragraph. At the end of the chapter, Harry closes the book and goes back to watch television. Harry doesn't look at the book again until the quiz.

Which of these students read the chapter in a systematic way?

Stewart did! He *previewed* and asked *questions* about the material and what he already knew. After that he *read* through the material, *recited* what he understood and learned; then later *reviewed* what he had learned.

So why is it important to read in a systematic way?

So you can **remember**, **understand** and be able to **recall** the things that you will need to use.

Practice

1. *From the example above, list at least **three** non-systematic and systematic approaches to reading a textbook.*

Systematic	Non-Systematic

Feedback

Systematic

- Read a section of text at a time
- Ask questions before, during and as you read the chapter.
- Preview the chapter before reading each paragraph or section.
- Review notes of what you learn before the quiz.
- Making notes in the book (Annotating)
- Studying in a quiet place
- Underlining keywords and concepts after reading a paragraph
- Reading a section you know the least about first

Non-Systematic

- Reading to from the beginning of the chapter to the end without stopping.
- Not asking questions
- Skipping words that you don't recognize instead of looking them up in the dictionary or glossary.
- Not reviewing the material after reading.
- Studying where there are distractions
- Highlighting whatever looks interesting.

Now we will look at one method to read your textbooks in a systematic, step-by-step way.

SQ3R

SQ3R is a systematic method that can aid you in reading and understanding your textbooks. Because you are looking for specific information while reading a textbook, it is important that you have a *tool* to help you find or identify and *remember* the important information that you will read.

SQ3R stands for

- *Survey* – Read specific parts of the chapter and develop a reading plan.
- *Question* – Ask questions about the material, your readiness and background knowledge of the chapter.
- *Read* – To examine, determine and distinguish the meaning of the passage.
- *Recite* – To say aloud or write what you understood from the reading.
- *Review*– to remember or recite at a later time what was learned.

Complete each of these steps in the same order presented. So if you were to read a textbook using the SQ3R method you would

1. **Survey** the entire passage
2. Ask **questions** before, during and after you read.
3. **Read** the passage
4. **Recite** (tell in your own words) what you learned
5. **Review** what you learned within a few hours and during the next few days.

Think of reading a textbook like taking a road trip to a place you have never been before. First, you would start by finding a map (*survey*) to see where you are now and where you want to go. You would ask *questions*. How long will it take? Which is the best way to go? What stops do I want to make along the way? Then you would start driving (*reading*). If you got lost you would ask for directions, or if you don't like asking for directions, you would consult a map and what you know about the area. Then after you arrived at your destination, you could tell someone what you saw along the way (*recite*). Then after you returned home you could tell your friends and family all the stories and fun you had on your trip (*review*).

So what does SQ3R stand for?

S _____
Q _____
R _____
R _____
R _____

Great! So now that you have a general idea of SQ3R lets look closer at each step.

Survey

When surveying a chapter, figure out what sections to focus more time on and what sections can be read through quickly. Make sure to look for general themes and specific ideas. Textbooks may seem difficult to read but their *structure* makes it easier to find what you are looking for.

By reading these items first, you will not only better understand what you will read, but improve your concentration, motivation, and interest while reading the material. In our road trip analogy this is similar to looking at a map to determine where you are going.

Here is a general list of items to survey in each passage or chapter.

Item	Purpose
<i>Titles</i>	Give an idea of what the whole chapter is about.
<i>Introduction</i>	Gives the important points of the chapter.
<i>Headings, Subheadings</i>	Give an idea of what the particular section is about.
<i>Special Words</i> (Bold , <i>Italic</i> , or <u>underlined</u>)	These are keywords, main ideas or other helpful information.
<i>Graphics</i> (Pictures, Charts, Graphs, Diagrams)	Give visual information of what the chapter is about.
<i>Summary</i>	Gives an overview of what the chapter was about.
<i>Questions at the end of the chapter</i>	Give ideas of questions to ask about the reading.

From memory, list at least 5 parts of the chapter that you would read during the survey or preview stage.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now that you know what to survey, go ahead and preview the rest of the instruction.

Question

To find an answer you must first ask a question.

Questioning is involved in each stage of SQ3R. To get the most out of your reading, you should ask questions *before*, *during* and *after* you read a passage. Asking questions helps you identify your **purpose** in reading and what you want to learn. As you read your textbook, ask questions that will help you understand the main ideas and the supporting details.

As you read you will ask two types of questions.

- Questions about **yourself**
- Questions about the **material**

Questions about yourself

Questions you ask *yourself* help you

- Identify your *readiness* to learn
- Determine your *background knowledge* of the subject
- Identify how *interested* you are in the material
- Define your *purpose*
- Identify where and when you should study
- Determine how much material you should read at a time

Examples of questions to ask *yourself* include but aren't limited to:

Before Reading:

“What do I already know about this topic?”

“Am I mentally ready to read?”

“Am I in a place free of distractions so I can concentrate?”

During Reading:

“Do I have a clear idea of what this chapter is about?”

“What will I do with what I am learning?”

After Reading:

“Do I understand what I just read?”

“Do I need to read the passage again?”

“What possible test questions can be asked from what I just read?”

Questions about the Material

Questioning the material changes you from learning passively to learning actively. You seek the information you need instead of hoping that you will remember it. As you read looking for answers to your questions, you will be able to understand more

and remember it longer. You can also use the questions at the end of the chapter to guide your reading.

Many times you can find the main idea of a chapter in the title, headings, or the first sentence of a paragraph. Ask questions about the material by **converting** the *title or heading into a question*, using *who, what, why* and *how*. You can also turn the main ideas of paragraphs into questions.

Examples of questions to ask about the material include:

“Do I understand _____?”

“What is the main idea of this paragraph?”

“How does this new idea fit or relate to what I read a few pages ago?”

“Change the heading “The War of 1812” to Why was the War of 1812 so important?”

The following is a heading from a section in an interpersonal communication textbook.

“Communication as a Negotiated Relationship”

Here are some examples of questions you could ask:

*“**What** is a negotiated relationship?”*

*“**Who** are the people that communicate in negotiated relationships?”*

*“**Why** would learning about the negotiation of relationships through communication be important?”*

*“**How** does communication take place in relationships that are negotiated?”*

*“**How** is communication a negotiated relationship?”*

Practice

1. Mark each statement as either true or false.

- a. **True or False:** Asking questions about yourself in relation to the reading helps identify your purpose for reading.
- b. **True or False:** You should only ask questions about yourself before reading.
- c. **True or False:** Asking questions about what you know of the subject helps you to identify what you don't know about a subject.
- d. **True or False:** Asking questions after reading the material would be a waste of time.

2. Convert the following sample paragraph headings into questions, using the question words *why, how* or *where*?

a. *“Evolution of the Species”*

b. *“Social Development of Children”*

c. *“Algebra Commutative Operations”*

Feedback

1.

a. True – Asking questions is a great way to determine *why* you are reading your textbook. It doesn't matter as much what your purpose is, as long as you know what it is.

b. False – You should ask questions about yourself *before, during, and after* you read.

c. True – The more you can define what you don't know about the subject will help you to know what you need to learn.

d. False – Asking questions may be harder than not asking them but it is only a waste of time if you don't find answers to your questions.

2. ***Were you able to come up with a question for each of the headings?***

If not, try using any question word such as how, what, why and who.

a. *Sample answer: "How did the Evolution of the Species occur?"*

"Why do we have to learn about the evolution of the species?"

b. *Sample answer: "How do children develop socially?"*

c. *Sample Answer:*

"Why is it important to learn commutative operations?"

"How do you perform a commutative operation?"

Congratulations! You are half-way done.

Read

How much should I read at one time?

Do you ever find yourself reading a textbook and can't remember what you read and you start thinking about your car, or the dishes that need to be done, or how hungry you are, or how you would rather do anything besides reading a textbook?

Let's face it. *Reading a textbook is hard work!*

That is why it is important to take one step at a time. **Chunking** is the process of breaking down your reading into smaller parts.

For example, instead of reading from start to finish a chapter entitled "*The American Revolution*," you would read a section like "Boston Tea Party" or one paragraph in that section. Then you would make sure you understood what the paragraph or section is about. Finally, underline or mark the main idea and supporting details before moving on to the next paragraph or section.

Like the saying goes "How do you eat an elephant...one bite at a time." If your textbook was an elephant and each sentence or paragraph was a bite then it would make sense to not bite off more than you could chew. So, in reading make sure that you *understand each paragraph or section before reading the next one*. If you break your reading up into smaller "**chunks**", you will find that your reading seems less like an elephant and more like a steak.

How much should I highlight and annotate?

Think of a book in terms of how someone thinks. When a person thinks of a concept, they have a general idea and then specific details. In reading a textbook it is important that you understand the *smaller (specific)* thoughts and link them to combine *bigger* ideas. Reading a textbook is a lot like doing a puzzle, you need to see the overall picture in order to see how each piece fits together. Remember, all information is not equal.

If all ideas are not equal, how do you determine which are the most important?

Here are some ideas to help you **mark** the most important information in the text.

- What do you already know about the text?
- What kind of information does the author think is the most important?
(Example. Repeated several times, bold words, look in the introduction or summary for clues)
- What does your instructor emphasize or talk the most about?
- What types of exams, papers or class discussions are you studying for?

Here are some ideas on highlighting and annotating (writing notes) in the textbook.

- As you read a sentence try **underlining or highlighting just a few words** that make up the main idea of that sentence. Do the same with paragraphs.
- Avoid underlining or highlighting whole sentences. Remember that *random highlighting* equals *random learning*. You may end up with a colorful book but unless you can find what you need easily when you review, it doesn't help you much.
- Be sure to underline or highlight any *details* that support the main ideas.
- Make annotations or comments about the text in the margin.
- If you cannot write in your textbook, consider *taking notes* about what you learn either using mind maps or other note taking strategies.
- Look for key information by asking questions. If you are *actively* reading by asking questions and answering them from the text, you will understand more than if you *passively* read the words and hope you will somehow remember them.
- Each time you read a paragraph or section you will learn more.

Practice

1. Why is it important to break your textbook reading into smaller chunks?

2. Mark the following as efficient or inefficient methods for marking important information in your textbooks.

Efficient	Inefficient	
		a. A student underlines or highlights whole paragraphs or sentences
		b. A student asks questions to determine which is important.
		c. A student reads the chapter without highlighting or taking notes.
		d. A student underlines main ideas after reading a complete paragraph.
		e. A student highlights, writes, or annotates (making notes in the textbook) when finding an answer to a question.
		f. A student will think about where they will have to use the information.

Feedback

1. Reading and understanding each *paragraph or sections* at a time make sure you understand those concepts before moving on to the next one. Mark the main ideas based on what is said in the *paragraph* instead of after each sentence. This helps you concentrate and stay focused on what you are reading.
2. Efficient vs Inefficient Textbook Marking
 - a. *Inefficient* Underlining or highlighting whole paragraphs doesn't help identify the key information that you will need for your classes. Underlining the main idea of the sentence would be better than underlining the whole sentence.
 - b. *Efficient* – Questions help to identify what you are looking for.
 - c. *Inefficient* – Reading the chapter a few times would help but without annotating or marking it would be very difficult to remember.
 - d. *Efficient* – After reading the paragraph you have understand what it is about and you can highlight or underline the key information easier than if you marked it while you were reading the passage.
 - e. *Efficient* – Finding answers to your questions are one of the best ways to identify key information.
 - f. *Efficient* – If you know how to identify the information that will be on a test or for a class discussion you will be on your way to understanding what you need to learn.

Recite

We forget information almost as fast as we put it in our brains. In reading a textbook you have to decide what things are the most important and then find ways to make that information stick. Reciting involves stating or writing *in your own words* the main ideas of the chapter and organizing them in ways that you can remember. This involves more than just highlighting or underlining. You should also recite after each chunk of text that you read.

Here are a few ways to recite what you read in a textbook passage.

Summarize – writing or speaking

Outlining – note taking in the order that you read

Mapping – linking main concepts to supporting details

Paraphrasing – say a key concept or definition in your own words.

*Questioning – write questions about anything you still don't understand
and ask someone*

Answer the questions that you asked during the survey or read steps

Practice

*Mark each of the statements below as either **true** or **false** about the Recite step*

1. **True or False:** Reciting is just writing down exactly what was in the book.
2. **True or False:** You should only recite after reading a whole chapter.
3. **True or False:** Reciting involves taking notes about what you read.
4. **True or False:** Reciting means putting in your own words what you understood and learned from the text

Feedback.

1. *False.* Reciting exactly what was in the book is more like repeating. Reciting would be to write down what you *understood or learned* from the particular section or paragraph you read.
2. *False.* You should recite after reading a paragraph or section.
3. *True.* Note-taking is one way to recite what you read.
4. *True.* The more you can put into you own words what you understood helps you identify what you learned.

Review

After reciting you need to review what you learned to help you remember and retain the information. By the time you get to this step you should have read the whole chapter or section that you set out to read. In reviewing, you will look over your notes of the chapter or skim through the chapter again. Remember that you will remember more by *reviewing* what you have learned the night before the test instead of *cramming* the night before.

Let's identify some ways to organize or reduce the important information into ways that will help you study and remember them.

- Simplify or expand your notes.
- Organize your notes right after reading to make sure you understood correctly what you learned.
- Make flowcharts, flashcards, time lines, or other things to rehearse and practice what you learned.
- Review what you learned every day, every week, and before the test. Don't just expect to remember what you read a week ago, without reviewing it before the test.
- Make sample test questions to study.
- Recite or write from memory the important points.
- Continue to reduce your notes to a manageable size.

Remember that during any of these stages it is important to be aware of things you don't understand. Go back and reread if necessary what you need to understand.

Practice:

Mark which column is the **most efficient** way to review the material.

A	B	Response
1. Reading everything the night before the test	1. Reviewing the material every few days before the test	
2. Not looking at your notes after you took them	2. Organizing your notes after you took them	
3. Assuming you know the material	3. Creating sample questions for the test or question how much you understand.	
4. Explain what you learned to someone	4. Read out of the chapter explanations of the material.	

Feedback

1. B. Using SQ3R will help you even if you have to cram the night before the test but it would be better to give yourself some time to review the material.
2. B. If you organize your notes by looking them over and deciding where the important parts, you will remember the information better.
3. B. If you predict what you will need to learn you are likely to ask some of the questions that will be on the test.
4. A. You will be able to identify what you know and don't know when you explain to someone else what you learned from the text.

Summary

The SQ3R method outlines a *systematic* way that you can read and identify what you need to know from a textbook. Remember that reading systematically helps you distinguish what information is important from what is not. Reading a textbook isn't just simply reading and highlighting. There are steps you take to before, during, and after you read to help you remember the information. One of the main purposes of SQ3R is to help you identify *your* purpose for reading and remember what you read.

The SQ3R method is comprised of

- Survey*- previewing a chapter to determine the main idea and purpose
- Question* – identify what is known and what needs to be learned.
- Read* – a paragraph or section at a time, isolating key information.
- Recite* – telling or writing in your own words what was learned.
- Review* – rehearse the important information to remember it.

Quiz

1. What is a systematic approach to textbook reading?
2. In your own words, why you would use a systematic approach to textbook reading?
3. Explain, in your own words, what you would do in each step and why.
Survey _____
Question _____
Read _____
Recite _____
Review _____
4. List the parts of a chapter you would survey?
5. Write one question that you could ask yourself *before* reading a textbook passage.
6. Write one question that you could ask yourself *after* you read a textbook passage.
7. Turn the following title into a question using the question word *why*,
“Systematic Textbook Reading”
8. How much text would you normally read before reciting what you have learned?
9. What items should you mark (highlight, underline) in a paragraph?
10. What are some ways that you could recite what you have learned?
11. When will you review what you have learned from your reading?