

SQ3R

SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review: five steps to help you complete your assigned readings more efficiently and study them more effectively. SQ3R helps you to grasp a reading's central points, remember an author's key claims, and challenge yourself to be an adept and confident critical reader. This Tip Sheet outlines the SQ3R process.

Step 1: Survey.

You *survey* an article or chapter in order to get a sense of its overall focus and argument. Since you are not reading every word of the text during this step, you may have to guess about the author's main points, which is just fine.

During the Survey step, pay special attention to:

- The abstract or summary
- Titles, headings, and subheadings
- Pictures, graphs, charts, maps
- The introduction and conclusion

Step 2: Question.

When you *question* a reading, you try to figure out how the reading relates to knowledge you already have. Your task here is also to decide what *new information* you want to learn from the reading. It's often helpful to look carefully at the title, section headings, and any questions that might be listed at the end of the reading.

Ask yourself:

- How does this reading relate to other course materials?
- What do I already know about the topic of the reading?
- What do I want to learn from the reading?

Write these questions down and develop a *question list* for your future reference.

Step 3: Read.

Now it's time to read the article carefully. Focus on one section at a time, keeping your questions from Step 2 in mind. Your goals should be to try to answer the questions you posed in Step 1, and develop – and answer – new questions that occur to you. Try to identify key arguments, ideas, and debates, and record them in your notes.

As you take notes, try to:

- Structure your notes as *answers to your questions*. This is more helpful (and more interesting) than simply copying down the author's words.
- Use your notes to comment on and respond to the author. Argue with, question, and expand upon the reading.
- Make connections between images, charts, and graphs, and the main text.

Step 4: Recite.

Reciting means testing your comprehension of the reading. This step is crucial to retaining the text's key points in your memory, which will help you to prepare for assignments and exams.

A few suggestions for this step:

- Pause at the end of each section and challenge yourself to summarize that section's key points. Close the book or turn the page over to ensure that you are summarizing the text in your own words.
- Ask yourself the questions you developed in Step 2. Try to answer the questions out loud to yourself (this helps the information "stick" in your long-term memory).

Step 5: Review.

Reciting just after you finish a reading is not enough to ensure that you will remember (and continue to think critically about) the material. To retain the information in the text, you must *review* it regularly – at least once every week after you have completed the reading.

When you are reviewing, use the same techniques you used in Step 4.

You may also want to ask yourself:

- What are the reading's most important points?
- How does the reading relate to other material assigned in this course and in my other courses?
- What new questions does the reading raise?
- How might I respond to the reading?

For Further Reading:

Francis Pleasant Robinson, *Effective Study* (Harper, 1961). HL, this book sounds sort of dry and musty, but it seems to be the original source for SQ3R. I would appreciate any other suggestions you might have – the online resources I've found aren't great.