



How to Read a Textbook

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The following strategy, **SQ4R**, is built around the idea that what you do *before* and *after* you read is as important as the reading itself. Learning is an *active* process which requires concentration and energy. Understanding and *using* the following strategies will increase your comprehension and your retention of the information.

SQ4R = Survey – Question – Read – Recite – Record – Review

Survey

Look over a chapter for a few minutes before studying it in depth.

- Read the title and introductory paragraph(s). Fix the name of the chapter in your mind. Often the introduction to the chapter supplies background for recognizing the purpose of the chapter. It may also state specifically the method of development the author intends to follow.
- Read headings, subheadings, and italicized words. Go through the chapter heading by heading; these will form a topical outline.
- Read the summary at the end of the chapter. Reread it to see which ideas the author restates for special emphasis or what general conclusions he or she comes to. If there is no summary, read the last sentence or two before each new heading.

Before reading:

- Use the chapter survey to activate your prior knowledge of the subject. Recall what you already know about the subject by trying to anticipate the chapter's main points.
- Use the chapter survey to predict the predominant thought patterns.
- Use surveying to anticipate which portions or sections of the chapter will be most difficult or challenging.

While reading:

- Use the survey as a guide to what is important to learn.
- Highlight, mark or underline key information mentioned in the survey.

After reading:

- Use the survey to monitor the effectiveness of your reading.
- Test your ability to recall the key information.
- Review immediately any material you were unable to recall.

Question

Formulate questions in before you read the material.

- Turn each heading and subtitle into a question. Form questions from all three sections of the "Levels of Comprehension" attached at the end of the packet (Who? What? When? Where?)



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Why? How?). You should be able to answer these questions when you finish reading and studying the paragraph, section, or chapter.

- Restate the questions from headings to help fix them in your mind. These questions give purpose to your reading. Remember that reading is thinking, and good students think while they read.

Read

Read the material.

- Read only the material covered under one heading or subheading at a time, and look for the answers to your questions.
- Read ideas, not just words.
- Take only minimal notes while reading.
- Read aggressively, with the intent of getting answers, of noting supporting details, and of remembering.
- Apply the 50/10 rule for studying; read for 50 minutes and then take a 10 minute break. You will be able to sustain longer study times with better concentration and retention.

Recite

Do "question-read-recite" for each subheading.

- Answer the questions that you raised before you began to read. Answer fully, and be sure to include the reasons the author believes the answer is true. Recall the answer and do not refer to the book.
- Tell yourself the major concept(s) of the section. **Put the ideas into your own words.** If you simply *read* a textbook chapter, you will probably remember less than one-third of what you read by the following week. In two months, you will remember about 14% of the material, hardly enough to do well on a test. To transfer a greater portion of the material you read from your short-term to long-term memory, you must do something *active* with the information to help "attach" it to your memory. If you take time after reading each section of the chapter to recite the information, you will ensure that more of it goes into long-term memory. If you recite, you are likely to remember 80% of what you read after a week and 70% after two months. Now check your answers by referring to the book.

Record

Take notes from the reading.

- After having read a section and reflected on what you have read and questioned yourself about the material, you are ready to take notes. Taking notes at this point in time will almost ensure that you are noting the important parts of the section. Go back over the paragraphs and highlight or underline only the main ideas and supporting details with no more than 10-15% of the page highlighted. Use marginal notations as a way to separate main ideas from examples and each of those from new terminology.



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Review

Review the material.

- Look over your notes and the headings and subheadings in the text. Get an overall view of the main points.
- Recall supporting details under each main point.
- Predict test questions based on these main points, especially questions which would fall into the critical and creative levels of reading comprehension. Try true/false and completion-type questions from details. Essay questions are easy to make from the main headings. Answer your test questions.

**The more senses you use in storing your information,
the better your retrieval and retention!**