Reading Strategies: The SQ3R Method

SQ3R is the most popular and influential active reading/study system. Designed in 1948 by Francis P. Robinson, SQ3R has stood the test of time and helped countless students read and study with greater efficiency and success. SQ3R provides guidelines on how to actively engage with texts before, during and after you read.

Here are the Steps:

S - Survey
Q - Question
R - Read
R - Recite
R - Review

SURVEY

Before reading, get oriented to the text. This helps you see how the text fits into the bigger picture of the class, connects to what you already know, and gets you focused. Surveying is a quick preview and should take very little time.

- Who wrote it and when?
- What type of text is it (academic scholarship, public scholarship, fiction, autobiography, review, analysis)?
- How does the text relate to course content?
- What is your purpose in reading it? (The answer to this question should be more than "It's an assignment." Rather, consider what you need to learn from the text and why?
- Read the title.
- Read any introduction material and/or summary, including author bio or abstract.
- Note section headings and subheadings, as well as, boldfaced words.
- Skim over graphs, tables, charts, etc. to see how they support and explain the text.
- Set a realistic goal for how much/how long you will read.

QUESTION

To increase your understanding you need to read with a purpose. Reading with a purpose in mind makes it easier to be an active reader, and active readers better comprehend and recall what they read. The best way to read actively is to pose questions in advance and read to answer those questions. Questions can be created by doing the following:

- You can frame headings, subheadings, or topic sentences into questions
- You can utilize questions at the end of the section/chapter
- You can incorporate questions provided by your instructor.
- Use a heuristic: Who? What? When? Where? How? Why does this matter?

READ

Now that you're prepared, begin reading with the goal to answer your questions. This helps you learn, analyze and reflect on course content, as well as prepare for class and, eventually, exams.

- Try to locate the answers to the questions you posed in your survey of the text.
- Use underlining, highlighting and/or annotating to note main ideas, important points, connections to other texts/ideas, and to note questions that arise.
- Think, interpret, and analyze the first time you read, to avoid unnecessary re-reading.
- Take breaks when you need to.

RECITE

After reading the entire text or sections, recite the answers to the questions you posed, as well as the important points and/or main ideas. Your goal should be to answer your questions and recite important information from memory.
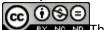
- Verbalize important points, ideas or passages in your own words.
- Without looking at the text, recall your questions and see if you can answer from your memory of the text.
- Write a brief summary, short notes, flash cards, or outlines of what you just read. Be brief to avoid losing reading momentum!

REVIEW

Reviewing helps you keep the material fresh in your mind so you can retain and recall the information for longer periods of time. It also helps you prepare for class, quizzes, papers and exams.

- Look over the text, your notes, markings and annotations.
- Quiz yourself by answering the questions you posed in the prior to Reading.
- Note connections between the reading you just did and ideas and concepts from other readings, class lectures and/or discussions.
- Repeat this process weekly to build your memory.