

THE ART OF READING – Seeking to Understand

Textbooks are often read in the same way pleasure books are read--begin with the first page of the chapter and read to the end of the chapter, without stopping. While this method is fine for novels and mysteries, it is not likely to result in the level of understanding and retention needed for most textbooks. To enhance understanding and retention of material that you read, SQ3R* process is helpful. It provides a different method of reading textbooks that will most likely. It's not a quicker way to read a chapter in a textbook but it is likely to reduce the amount of time one will need to spend studying the material immediately prior to the test. This is so because more time is spent actually understanding the chapter when it is read initially. Study time then becomes deepening your understanding of the material.

* SQ3R is an acronym coined by F. P. Robinson, 1946, in a book entitled "Effective Study"

OVERVIEW OF SQ3R

As the acronym SQ4R suggests, the process has five steps.

They are. Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review

SURVEY

This step helps you gather the information necessary to focus on the chapter and formulate questions for yourself as you read the chapter. It's not necessary to have answers to your questions at this step of the process. The answers will come later in the process. This step should take no more than 5 - 10 minutes but is very important.

<i>Read the title</i>	This helps your brain begin to focus on the topic of the chapter.
<i>Read the introduction and / or summary</i>	This orients you to how this chapter fits the author's purposes. It also provides you with an overview of the author's statement of the most important points.
<i>Read each boldface heading and sub-heading</i>	This helps you to create a framework for the chapter in your mind before you begin to read. This framework provides a structure for the thoughts and details to come.
<i>Review any graphics</i>	Charts, maps, diagrams, pictures and other visual aids are there to make a point. Publishers will not include these items in the book unless they are deemed to significantly add to the text.
<i>Review any reading aids in the chapter.</i>	This includes italics, chapter objectives, definitions and study questions at the end of the chapter. These aids are there to help you sort, comprehend and remember. Use them to your advantage.

QUESTION

Now that you have surveyed the entire chapter to build a framework for understanding the chapter, it's time to begin the reading process. This step and the next two, read and recite, are repeated over and over as you read the chapter.

<i>Turn boldface headings into one or more questions and write down your questions on the left third of a piece of paper.</i>	As you read this section, you will be looking for the answer to your questions. For example, if you are reading a book to help you to improve your study skills and the heading is "use a regular study area", the questions you might ask are "why should I have a regular study area" where should my regular study area be located?"
<i>Why do I need to take time to do this step?</i>	When your mind is actively searching for answers to questions, it becomes engaged in the learning process. This will help you to remember and understand the information.

READ

Reading the section fills in the information around the mental structures you have been building by surveying the chapter and developing questions about the section.

<i>Read one section at a time</i>	As you read the section, look for the answers to your questions and note them down, in your own words, on the right two-thirds of your piece of paper.
<i>Add more questions, if necessary</i>	A single question is probably adequate for a section that is only a few paragraphs; however, for longer sections, you may find that you need to add a question or two.
<i>Don't get bogged down with the details.</i>	Well-written textbooks often provide examples to further explain the main ideas. As you read the section, try to separate the details from the main ideas. Use the details to help you to understand the main ideas but don't expect yourself to memorize every detail provided in the chapter.

RECITE

Reciting material as you go retrains your mind to concentrate and learn as it reads.

<i>When do you recite?</i>	At the end of each section of the chapter.
<i>How do you recite?</i>	Look at the question (s) you wrote down before you read the section. Cover your answers with a piece of paper and see if you can answer the questions from memory.
<i>What if you can't recall the answers to your questions?</i>	Reread the section or the part of the section that has to do with that question.

When you can answer your question (s) about this section, go back to step two, "question." Develop and write down your question (s) for this section, read the section and then recite again. Proceed through the chapter repeating these three steps.

REVIEW

The review step helps you refine our mental organization of the material in the chapter and begin to build memory. We learn through repetition. This step provides another opportunity for repetition of the material and therefore will enhance our recall of the information.

<i>How do you review?</i>	Once you've finished reading the entire chapter using the survey, question, read and recite steps, go back over all your questions. Cover the answers to the questions you've developed and written down and see if you can still recite them.
<i>What if some of the answers have been forgotten?</i>	Reread the section of the chapter to refresh your memory, recite the answer after you've written it down and then continue your review process.

SQ4R

Ellie Vendetti, Professor of English at Capital Community College prepared SQ4R based on SQ3R. This includes one additional 'R' for 'Rite referring to writing before reviewing.

Overview of SQ4R:

An important part of the college experience is learning to learn. SQ4R is one strategy that can help you get the most out of your textbook reading. Pursued systematically and consistently, SQ4R will assure that you don't just "do it," when it comes to your reading assignments; you will derive as much as you possibly can out of the experience.

Survey: (Overview: quickly look through the chapter for the main idea or the author's unifying theme)

- Table of Contents
- Introduction/Summary; first sentence of each paragraph
- Headings (memorize if possible)
- Pictures, charts, diagrams, etc.
- Vocabulary lists, notated print, captions, etc.

Question: (Establish a purpose. Begin to think about the material.)

- Turn headings and subheadings into questions.
- Read all questions within the chapter/text.
- Try to guess at the answers.

Read: (To answer the questions)

- Carefully read (in manageable chunks) to answer questions.
- Correct incorrect guesses from early questioning.
- Note important details and relationships of ideas.

Recite: (Answers to questions with the book closed)

- State orally answers to questions.
- State key facts and concepts.
- Reread any areas which are unclear.

'Rite: (Take notes!)

- Take accurate notes on basic concepts.
- Prepare a study sheet for exams.
- Use outline, idea line, split paper method, etc.

Review: (At short intervals)

- Review notes.
- Be able to answer all questions.
- Predict test questions and answer them.

WHEN TO USE SQ3R

No technique is useful 100% of the time. Now that you've learned another study strategy, it is important to decide when to use it. Different study strategies work best in different situations.

<p><i>SQ3R is useful with many textbooks but for which ones is it less likely to be useful?</i></p>	<p>SQ3R is probably less useful with textbooks that focus on helping you solve problems. For instance, it may not be useful to employ SQ3R with math textbooks. Focusing your energy on solving mathematical problems using the information in the chapter is probably a better use of your time. Two other types of textbooks for which SQ3R may be less useful is beginning foreign language texts or texts for English class. The focus of beginning foreign language texts is often vocabulary, verb tense and sentence construction. Books for English class may be novels and the purpose of reading may be focused more on the "big picture" than on the content of a particular section or chapter.</p>
<p><i>Now that you know when NOT to use SQ3R, when should you use it?</i></p>	<p>SQ3R is an excellent technique to use with textbooks that provide a lot of information and require you to learn the material in depth. Textbooks in many disciplines such as biology, psychology, and sociology fall into this category.</p>

IMPROVING READING SPEED

It is safe to say that almost anyone can double his speed of reading while maintaining equal or even higher comprehension.

The average college student reads between 250 and 350 words per minute on fiction and non-technical materials. A "good" reading speed is around 500 to 700 words per minute, but some people can read a thousand words per minute or even faster on these materials. What makes the difference? There are three main factors involved in improving reading speed: **(1) the desire to improve, (2) the willingness to try new techniques and (3) the motivation to practice.**

Assuming that you have the necessary vocabulary and comprehension skills, here are suggestions to improve your reading speed.

The Role of Speed in the Reading Process:

Research has shown a close relation between speed and understanding. For example, in checking progress charts of thousands of individuals taking reading training, it has been found in most cases that an increase in rate has been paralleled by an increase in comprehension, and that where rate has gone down, comprehension has also decreased. This shows that comprehension is actually better at higher rates of speed. Such results, of course, are heavily dependent upon the method used to gain the increased rate. Simply

reading more rapidly without actual improvement in basic reading habits usually results in lowered comprehension.

Factors that Reduce Reading Rate:

1. Some of the facts which reduce reading rate:
2. limited perceptual span i.e., word-by-word reading;
3. vocalization, including the need to vocalize in order to achieve comprehension;
4. faulty eye movements, including inaccuracy in placement of the page, in return sweep, in rhythm and regularity of movement, etc.;
5. faulty habits of attention and concentration;
6. lack of practice in reading, due simply to the fact that the person has read very little and has limited reading interests;
7. fear of losing comprehension, causing the person to suppress his rate deliberately;
8. poor evaluation of which aspects are important and which are unimportant;
9. Since these conditions act also to reduce comprehension increasing the reading rate through eliminating them is likely to result in increased comprehension as well.

Basic Conditions for Increased Reading Rate

A well planned program prepares for maximum increase in rate by establishing the necessary conditions. Four basic conditions include:

1. Have your eyes checked. Any correctable eye defects you may have are taken care of by checking with your eye doctor. Often, very slow reading is related to uncorrected eye defects.
2. Eliminate the habit of pronouncing words as you read. If you sound out words in your throat or whisper them, you can read slightly only as fast as you can read aloud. You should be able to read most materials at least two or three times faster silently than orally.
3. Avoid regressing (rereading). The average student reading at 250 words per minute regresses or rereads about 20 times per page. Rereading words and phrases is a habit that will slow your reading speed down to a snail's pace. Usually, it is unnecessary to reread words, for the ideas you want are explained and elaborated more fully in later contexts. Furthermore, the slowest reader usually regresses most frequently. Because he reads slowly, his mind has time to wander and his rereading reflects both his inability to concentrate and his lack of confidence in his comprehension skills.
4. Develop a wider eye-span. This will help you read more than one word at a glance. Since written material is less meaningful if read word by word, this will help you learn to read by phrases or thought units.

Rate Adjustment:

The reader must learn to adjust his rate to his purpose in reading and to the difficulty of the material he is reading. This ranges from a maximum rate on easy, familiar, interesting material or in reading to gather information on a particular point, to minimal rate on material which is unfamiliar in content and language structure or which must be thoroughly digested. Rate adjustment may be overall adjustment to the article as a whole, or internal adjustment within the article. Overall adjustment establishes the basic rate at which the total article is read; internal adjustment involves the necessary variations in rate for each varied part of the material.

In general, decrease speed when you find the following

1. Unfamiliar terminology not clear in context. Try to understand it in context at that point; otherwise, read on and return to it later;
2. Difficult sentence and paragraph structure; slow down enough to enable you to untangle them and get accurate context for the passage;
3. Unfamiliar or abstract concepts. Look for applications or examples of your own as well as studying those of the writer. Take enough time to get them clearly in mind;
4. Detailed, technical material. This includes complicated directions and statements of difficult principles;
5. Material on which you want detailed retention.

In general, increase speed when you meet the following:

1. Simple material with few ideas which are new to you; move rapidly over the familiar ones; spend most of your time on the unfamiliar ideas;
2. Unnecessary examples and illustrations. Since these are included to clarify ideas, move over them rapidly when they are not needed;
3. Detailed explanation and idea elaboration which you do not need,
4. Broad, generalized ideas and ideas which are restatements of previous ones. These can be readily grasped, even with a scan.

Conclusion:

Keep your reading flexible by adjusting your rate sensitivity from article to article. It is equally important to adjust your rate within a given article. Practice these techniques until a flexible reading rate becomes second nature to you.
