GUIDE TO THE SQ3R METHOD

The Survey-Question-Read-Recite-Review (SQ3R) method is a set of study-strategies aimed at systematically understanding, remembering, and learning from reading material(s). Bear in mind that like all skills, the SQ3R method takes time to perfect. Because SQ3R aims to help you comprehensively retain what you have read, it may seem time consuming—but with frequent practice and refinement, it can become another powerful tool for you to utilize in your studies.

SURVEY (5-10 minutes): Before diving into a text, take some time to get familiar with the author’s style of writing by skimming through some of the introductory sections of the material (e.g. read the preface and introduction to a book or the abstract and introductory paragraphs to a journal article).

After reading the introductory sections of the text, scan through the reading. Read all the different headings, examine any diagrams, graphs, or pictures. Also read the conclusion of the text, along with the summary if there is one. Surveying a text in this way gives you a clearer understanding of the purpose of the text and helps you to identify key concepts and main ideas. Having this initial overview of a text gives you a structure to organize the details that you will draw from the text later on in the reading process.

QUESTION (1-2 minutes per heading/title): Now that you’ve surveyed the text, it is time to start asking questions. Generating questions from the text will help you stay focused in your reading and identify key points. Try formulating questions from titles and headings within the text. For example, if you’re reading a section with the heading “Long-Term Effects of Early Stressful Life Experiences”, you can turn that into, “What are the long-term effects of early stressful life experiences?”. Writing the questions in the margin, by the relevant heading, could be a useful strategy in conducting this process.

READ: Having surveyed the text and asked a few initial questions, you are now ready to start reading. Keeping the questions that you created in mind and trying to find answers to them is a good way to stay focused while reading. Read the text in sections! You do not want to read the whole chapter or article all at once. A good way to break your reading up into sections is to take notes inside the margins while reading one subheading at a time. Also, reread sections that are difficult and if you come across large sections, break them down to make them more manageable.

RECITE: Once you’ve read sections of a text, close it and in your own words recall what you’ve just read and try answering your questions. You can do this orally and/or on paper. You may find that the questions you asked need to be rewritten and refined. If you cannot answer your questions or the reading is confusing, try re-reading the section. If you still have difficulty understanding what you have read after re-reading, try reading the next few sections to see if they provide more clarity.

REVIEW: When you have completed the entire chapter or assigned section, re-read your outline and look away and recite main ideas that were included in your questions and annotations. Continue this process until you feel that you understand the material.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
If you are still having difficulty, feel free to seek support. Attending your professor’s office hours, signing up for a tutoring appointment, or seeing an Academic Skills Tutor (AST) at THINK TANK are all resources that you can use to help with clarifying the difficulties of reading at the college level. For instructions on how to sign up to meet with an AST, please send THINK TANK an email at sls-thinktank@email.arizona.edu or call the front desk of the THINK TANK at 520-626-0530.

For an SQ3R template to help you get started, check out: http://thinktank.arizona.edu/resources

Adapted from Francis P. Robinson

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