



# Become a More Efficient and Effective Reader

Many college students discover that there is significantly more to read in college than there was in high school. Students frequently remark that they don't have enough time to read through all of their assignments during the week. However, many students have bad habits and subscribe to reading myths. (See *Reading Myths and Skimming*.)

Any of the following methods will help make your reading more efficient and useful. They are listed in the order of how easy they are to implement and how useful they are in helping you learn the material. For example, SQ3R (my favorite) is more involved but also more helpful.

## Pre-Reading

Before you start the first reading assignment in any text, determine how a typical chapter is constructed. (All of the other chapters will be put together the same way. If one chapter has a summary, they all will; if one chapter has questions, they all will.) Use this knowledge when you have a reading assignment and structure your approach accordingly. Chapter organization and headings can help you put things in order and determine which things are important. If chapter tools are included (outline, summary, review, quiz, diagrams, etc), identify those that you find useful and use them. Ignore those that aren't useful.

## 3R Academic Survival

This method contains all the essential techniques for mastering textbook assignments. This is an "exam passer."

- R1 READ Read the chapter paragraph by paragraph. Read and re-read until you can answer the question: "What did the author say in this paragraph?"
- R2 RECORD Once you are able to describe what is in a paragraph, you will want to retain that learning by underlining or making notes in the margin. Don't be afraid to write in your text. Interact with the text the way you'd interact with a person. If you're using a rented or borrowed text, make notes in your notebook. You might even decide to designate a notebook to use only for your reading notes. You can also record information on 3x5 cards to use later as flash cards.
- R3 RECITE Cover up your notes and recite *aloud*. Remember: If you can't say it now, you won't be able to say it tomorrow in class or write it in a week on an exam. While you still have a chance, try and try again until you can say it.

## SQ3R Method

This method will revolutionize your ability to learn. At first, though, it will seem cumbersome and you'll be tempted to skip things ... especially the things you're supposed to write. Resist the

temptation! Force yourself to follow the steps exactly, every time. Sooner than you'd think, the whole process will be habit ... and you'll be amazed at how much more easily and quickly you are able to complete assigned readings and learn the material.

- Step 1    SURVEY    Look over the material critically. Skim through the chapter and read topical and sub-topical headings and sentences. Read the summary at the end of the chapter. Try to anticipate what the author is going to say.
- WRITE these notes on paper, in sequence; then look over the notes to get an overall idea or picture. This will enable you to see where you're going.
- Step 2    QUESTION    Change paragraph/section headings (Basic Concepts of \_\_) into questions (What are the basic concepts of \_\_?). These questions will become *hooks* on which to hang the reading material.
- WRITE these questions out. Look over the questions to see the emphasis and direction. Attempt to give plausible answers before reading further.
- Step 3    READ    Read with smoothness and alertness, attempting to find answers to the questions you wrote.
- WRITE notes, in your own words, under each question. (You can also write the questions and answers on opposite sides of 3x5 cards to use later as flashcards.) Take a *minimum* number of notes to use as a skeleton.
- Step 4    RECALL    Immediately upon completing the reading and without looking at your text or notes, recall aloud and in your own words the high points of the material.
- a. This forces you to check your understanding.
  - b. This channels the material into a natural and usable form.
  - c. This highlights what you do not understand.
  - d. This forces you to think.
- Note: *Always spend more time on recall than on reading.* It's important!
- Step 5    REVIEW    Look at your questions, answers, notes and text to see how well you recalled the material. Observe carefully the points you stated incorrectly or omitted. Fix carefully in your mind the logical sequence of the entire idea, concept or problem. Finish up with a mental picture of the WHOLE with all the parts fitted together.

If you're interested, there's also an [SO4R Method](#).