

SQ4R READING SYSTEM

Step 1: Survey

The first step in the SQ4R is to gain an overview of the material through identifying the organization of the material and relationship of the main ideas to each other **before reading**. Pay attention to headings, sub headings, chapter titles, illustrations, charts, diagrams, and boldface type. Surveying serves three purposes: (1) it gives you the big picture, (2) it stabilizes and directs your thoughts, and (3) it gets over the starting hump.

Step 2: Question

The question step of SQ4R involves making questions of chapter headings, key terms, and boldfaced type. As you survey, begin to form question that you hope to answer as you read. Asking questions will keep you actively thinking about what is coming up and will help you maintain an appropriate critical distance.

- Turn the heading and subheadings into questions
- Imagine specific test questions covering each major point in your reading.
- Be thorough by asking the journalist's questions: *who, what when, where, why, and how*.

Step 3: Read Carefully

As you read, answer the previously formed questions. Keep track of your answers by active learning techniques such as highlighting the text, mind mapping, or outlining (See Active Reading Handout). Engaging actively with the text this way will draw you deeper into the writing, help you remain concentrated, and give your reading purpose. You'll trigger memories and make surprising connections in the process.

Step 4: Record

The record step of SQ4R involves stopping at the end of each paragraph or section of information to take notes or record important information.

- Your notes become a reduced or a condensed form of the information you need to study and learn.
- Taking notes keeps you actively involved in the learning process and reduces the tendency for you to read without processing information clearly.
- Taking notes holds information in working memory and provides more time for you to encode it for your long-term memory.
- Creating a set of notes requires identification of key concepts and attention to key details and relationship among details. See Note Taking resources for strategies.

Step 5: Recite

The reciting step of SQ4R involves reciting the key points that were read and written in your notes. Reciting properly is the most important step in not forgetting. Reciting is a guard against the risky assumption that an answer has been learned. Many students are satisfied

with the feeling of understanding an answer and never get around to testing the state of their actual understanding. Therefore, many students go into exams feeling they know the material but not knowing for certain if the material has been learned until they get the exam back. Reciting tests your comprehension, drives the material deeper into your long-term memory, and helps connect the content with what you already know.

Continue to move through the reading by using the **Read-Record-Recite** Cycle.

Step 6: Review

The review step of SQ4R involves using immediate and ongoing review. Research shows that reviewing within 24 hours helps considerably to move information from your short-term memory to your long-term memory. Following are activities you can use to review the content in the chapter:

- Answer the chapter review questions that appear at the end of the chapter.
- Answer the questions you formulated during the *question step*.
- Study and recite from the notes that you took in the *record step*.
- Write a summary. In your own words, summarize the important concepts and details.
- Create additional study tools, such as flashcards, outlines, study tapes, or visual notes.
- Rework problems. Rework problems from class or from your textbook.

Adapted from:

Wong, L. *Essential Study Skills*. Australia: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012.

VanderMey, R. *The College Writer: A Guide to Thinking, Writing, and Researching*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2009.

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