

Using SQ3R to further develop your approach to reading

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SQ3R, as a particular technique when reading, can help us to select relevant information to read, to question what we read and to understand more about the reading we do which can be useful when we are studying and writing assessments.

This guide sets out the different stages of the SQ3R technique, providing an approach to help you get more from your reading.

Stage 1: SURVEY – Scan the text to gain an overview

- Read the title and headings of the sections
- Read and familiarise yourself with words which are bold or italicised
- Look at charts and diagrams and read captions
- Read the introduction and conclusion
- Read any questions you have been set about the reading
- Decide if this text will give you the information you are looking for. If not, move the reading to one side – you might need to come back to it later

Try it out:

Make notes on your thinking about how some or all of this information is connected to an assignment on which you are currently working, information in lectures and seminars and/or other reading you have done.

Stage 2: QUESTION – Understand what the text is about and how it relates to your study

- Think of questions you currently have about the topic and what you need to know/find out; it might be useful to make use of questions such as what, how why, so what to help you consider more analytical and evaluative aspects of a subject area
- Try turning titles and headings into questions which may help you better understand how the text is relevant to your studies
- Make notes on apparent connections between this text and what you currently understand by the subject area

Try it out:

Questions you have may be around definitions of key concepts, examples of practice and/or theoretical perspectives, for instance. For a little more guidance on the use of critical questions to help you further explore a subject area, please have a look at the accompanying guide.

Stage 3: READ – Study the text in detail

- Read the text, one section at a time
- Pay attention to any words which are bold or italicised
- Pay attention to any charts and diagrams
- Re-read any sections on which you are not clear
- Look to make notes in answer to the questions you posed for yourself during Stage 2 of this process

Try it out:

What other techniques will you make use of to mark particularly significant areas of the text? Consider how you might highlight and annotate particular words, phrases or short sections.

Stage 4: RECALL - Remember the text and describe it in your own words

- After each section, look away from the text
- Try to answer the questions you set for yourself
- Recite the answer or write it down
- Use examples to help you recall the details
- Record any words you did not know and had to look up

Try it out:

After reading each section, look away from the text and consider how you might tell someone else about what you have just read. By making use of your own vocabulary and phrases, this will also help with your skill of paraphrasing.

Stage 5: REVIEW - Locking the information in your memory

- After each chapter, review your questions and the answers you have noted down

Try it out:

Write a summary of not only what you have read, but also its relevance (or not) to your current studies, including any other literature you have read. Discuss the reading with a peer to not only listen to your own perspective, but also hear another someone else's.

Additional research about SQ3R

There are a great deal of additional online resources about SQ3R method for reading.

For example, you might want to have a look at the following;

The Royal Literacy Fund provides an overview of SQ3R: <https://www.rlf.org.uk/resources/how-to-read-sq3r/>