

# Textbook Study System (SQ3R)

Students interpret the processes needed for learning in many different ways. For many students, frantic reading of assigned textbook material just before a test is what they call "studying". Another inaccurate belief about "studying" is that it entails painfully memorizing main ideas and details and giving them back verbatim on exams. But actually, "**studying**" consists of using a method to gather information, organize it, and employ proven techniques to recite and review it regularly to prepare for exams.

The SQ3R is a method to attack textbook assignments in a way which works for most learners. It promotes an inquisitive, aggressive attitude and duplicates the mental processes of successful learners.

**SQ3R** stands for: **Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review.**

## STEP 1

## SURVEY

The purpose of Surveying is to gain a view of a chapter as a whole, its orderly development, and its relationship to the whole text, **BEFORE READING.**

**Spend 1 to 2 minutes Surveying** in the following manner:

- A. **Focus on the name of the chapter.** It is the main idea you are supposed to get from the chapter.
- B. **Read the introduction, outline, or objectives of a chapter.** It supplies background information needed to recognize the purpose of the chapter. Secondly, it may state specifically the mode of development the author intends to follow. Both are important for faster reading speed and greater understanding of how ideas in a chapter fit together.
- C. **Pay attention to headings and sub-headings.** Well-written college textbooks are divided into sections; each headed by a title in large, bold print. The title names the major topic to be presented and indicates that the author thinks this idea is very important. There may be several sub-headings under the heading. They indicate important details in the chapter.
- D. **Look at other clues to important ideas.** This will help those who say. "I never know what is important" or "I can't tell main points from minor ones". Authors indicate which points are important for you! Frequently, there are clues such as bold print, italics, numbered items, color coded passages, marginal notes, etc.
- E. Read the **summary** to see which ideas the author restates for special emphasis or what conclusions are drawn. **A summary contains the main ideas of a chapter.**
- F. **Look over words in the list of important terms** at the end of chapters. These are key ideas which you must understand in order to learn the material in the chapter.

## STEP 2

## QUESTION

Make questions out of heading and subheadings. For example, if the first heading in a chapter is "The Judiciary and the Constitutionally Courts," skim the details as a guide to the kinds of questions you can make. If the details provide definitions, form the questions, "What is the Judiciary" and "What are the Constitutional Courts?" If the details explain characteristics of the relationship, a question could be "What are # (a number) characteristics of the relationship between the Judicial and the Constitutional Courts?" Using abbreviations, the question appears:

**"What are 3 chars. of rela. betw. The Jud. & Const. Courts?"**

If there is a marginal note, "The need for Constitutional Courts," your question could be "Why do we need Constitutional Courts?"

**Details always dictate the format of a question.**

### STEP 3

### READ

While holding the question clearly in mind, read the details to answer your question. Doing this **creates a clear purpose for reading**, i.e., to find answers to questions. Positive results are greater concentration and it reduces the "Blank Mind Syndrome" where you can't recall what you just read. You will gain skill in recognizing important details and supporting arguments as you read. Making questions and answers increases memory at test time.

### STEP 4

### RECITE

Reciting properly is **the most important step to prevent forgetting**.

- A. **Read your question.**
- B. **Without looking, recite the answer aloud.** Answer fully as if you are lecturing to include any "Where's" and "When's" or "How's" and "Why's" that have appeared. The key to success lies in reciting the answer aloud or writing it out. A good way to increase memory is to write the answer down in the form of an outline, short paragraph, a chart, diagram, or formula.
- C. **Check your answer** by referring to your notes or the book.

Reciting is a guard against the risky **assumption** that an answer has been learned. Many students are satisfied with the feeling of understanding the answer and never get around to testing their actual learning. Therefore, many students go into exams feeling they know the material but actually not really knowing it.

Reciting requires "**interaction**" with the text which is more than "passively reading over the text" a common study technique. **Reciting promotes speed learning** while rereading and rereading actually impedes it.

Repeat the Question-Read-Recite process for the successive headings in the chapter.

### STEP 5

### REVIEW

One of the purposes of the Review step is to achieve chapter unity. Very few students can gulp down a whole chapter by reading it once. The Question-Read-Recite process divides the chapter into sections that can be learned separately, piece-by-piece. Review puts it back together again. In review, you are answering your chapter title question which in our example was "What is the Judiciary and how does it work?"

Review means regularly and frequently reciting the material to be learned. This is an excellent way to learn and can eliminate entering an exam "feeling" the material has been learned when it may not have been.

The natural objection to SQ3R is that it takes time. **It is** slower than simply reading. But it is a solution to the common problem of "**I can't remember what I just read**" or "**I thought I knew that**" after receiving a low grade on a test.



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