

THE SQ3R READING METHOD SYSTEM

The method of reading called SQ3R Reading System has helped many students improve their reading comprehension since it was first developed by Professor Francis Robinson in 1941. It suggests that the reader apply five steps to be an effective reader.

- **STEP #1 “S” for SURVEY**

First, SURVEY the reading assignment quickly, taking no more than five minutes to glance over a whole chapter.

- Check the headings sub-headings; they represent the author’s outline and make it easy for you to follow his organization of ideas.
- Inspect all graphs, maps, tables, diagrams and pictures; they are included because they clearly summarize, in a more visible and tangible way, many facts and relationships that would otherwise require hundreds of words.
- Read the introductory and summary paragraphs; they point out the important points to look for as you read and how these concepts are related to each other. Making such a preview will orient you to what the chapter is all about before you study it in detail.

- **STEP #2 “Q” for QUESTION**

Second, arouse your curiosity about the material by asking yourself the following QUESTION: “What are the main points that the author is trying to tell me?”

- As you read, convert headings and subheadings into who, what, where, when, why and how questions, and read to find the answers to these questions. Challenging yourself to find answers to such questions will help you to maintain interest in what you are reading and will aid you in evaluating the significance of what you are reading.

- **STEP #3 “R” for READ**

Third, READ the assignment carefully for meaning.

When you read, do not read passively as you would an adventure story. Novels are for entertainment and are written without any concern for whether or not you remember details.

- Read actively! Underline key words and phrases to aid you in recalling the main points of the chapter.
- Use an asterisk, exclamation point or question mark to indicate an important definition, a key formula, or a potential test question.
- Summarize key ideas in your own words in the page margin of the book. Remember, such active participation in the reading process will increase your understanding of the material being read.

- **STEP #4 “R” for RECITE**

Fourth, stop at appropriate intervals and RECITE to yourself from memory the main points of the assignment, recalling only the essential details to understand what the author is trying to say.

- Without looking at the book, check whether you have learned the major concepts by trying to restate them in your own words. If you cannot do this immediately after reading the material, you cannot hope to do it tomorrow in class or next week on an exam. Such self-recitation provides a way to test yourself quickly and easily to reveal what you have learned. If you can't repeat most of the main points, then you haven't learned the material and you will simply have to reread it again if you are to master what you are studying.

- **STEP #5 “R” for REVIEW**

Finally, REVIEW the chapter at periodic intervals to refresh your memory and make the facts stick. Don't wait until you are confronted with an examination to do your reviewing. That's a good time for the final review, but not the first review.

- Reviewing is simply the process of going over the material again in order to fix it in your memory.

- Reread your marginal notes and underlining and say over again the sequence of main ideas and supporting facts until you have them once more firmly in mind. Research has clearly demonstrated that the best time to review material is shortly after you have learned it. It is most important, therefore, that you not omit this review immediately after learning. You will, of course, want to review the material again just before the test.

STEPS TO CRITICAL READING

A critical reader constantly asks one big question as he reads:

AM I REALLY THINKING ABOUT WHAT I'M READING?

Break that question apart into many other questions:

Consider the Source -

- What kind of publication is this?
- What is the author's background in this subject?
- To whom is the author writing?

Recognize what is Said -

- Has the author really said what I think he said?

Recognize Assumptions & Implications -

- Does the author make inconsistent statements?

- What has the author assumed to be true? Which of these assumptions are stated? Unstated?
- Does a particular statement depend on context for its intended meaning?
- What does the author imply? Insinuate?

Recognize Intent, Attitude, Tone, Bias -

- Why is the author writing this? Motive? Purpose?
- What is the author's attitude? Tone? Bias?
- Does the author mean what he says – or is he making his point in a roundabout way through humor, satire, irony, or sarcasm?
- Are the author's words to be taken exactly as they appear, or are they slang, idioms, or figures of speech?
- Which of the author's statements are facts? Opinions?

Analyze Arguments –

- Does the author write emotionally? – Using sentiment? Horror? Name-calling? Flag waving?
- Which of the author's statements are supported? Which are left unsupported?
- What conclusions does the author reach?
- Of the author's conclusions, which are justified? Which are not justified?

A Critical Reader:

1. Does not believe everything he/she reads.
2. Questions everything that doesn't make sense to him/her.
3. Questions some things even though they do make sense.
4. Rereads when he/she thinks something may have been missed.
5. Considers the type of material being read before deciding how much weight to give it.
6. Admits that the effect on him/her of what the author says may be caused more by the author's style of writing than by the facts presented.
7. Analyzes arguments.
8. Discounts arguments based on faulty reading.
9. Has good reasons for believing some things and disbelieving others – for agreeing with some authors and disagreeing with others.

Adapted from Critical Reading Improvement, Anita Harnadek (McGraw-Hill, 1978)