

SQ₃R

Survey

Question

**Read and
Underline**

**Recite and
Write**

Review

SQ₃R FOR SUCCESS

When you read a love letter, you savor each word and have absolutely no difficulty concentrating. You do not need to underline the main ideas or make marginal notes. Textbook reading is different. You must learn to apply special reading skills when you study complicated materials. An explanation of the SQ₃R reading technique (explained below) can reduce your study time and significantly increase your ability to grasp essential information.

Have you ever found yourself in this situation? It's the night before the exam, and you have three chapters to read. Of course, you should have read them when they were first assigned, but between your job and other obligations, you just couldn't find the time. You could have read the chapters last weekend, but how could you pass up the opportunity to take a road trip with your friends or to watch the big game on television? Or perhaps you were caring for a sick child or resolving a relationship issue. The point is that, unless you have an effective plan for studying, you will quickly fall behind. As a result, you now find yourself coping with a tension headache or acid indigestion (or both) as you try to stay awake all night cramming for the test.

The first step toward avoiding an eleventh-hour, pre-exam time crunch is to break up the task of reading textbook chapters into manageable and meaningful chunks. This study aid will help you to learn to use a series of five learning strategies developed and tested by a psychologist: **Survey**, **Question**, **Read**, **Recite**, and **Review**. Together, these steps are known as the **SQ₃R method**. You will learn and remember more if, instead of simply reading each chapter, you follow these steps. Here's how they work:

- **Survey.** First, scan the chapter. Spend no more than 10 minutes to take a “sneak preview” of the chapter.
 - Examine the title of each chapter.
 - Examine the chapter outline to help you preview the content and its organization.
 - Read each section heading and the learning objective questions (if they are included), which are designed to focus your attention on key information.
 - Read or look over the illustrations and tables, including any tables which organize, review, and summarize key concepts.
 - Then read the summary, which is usually found at the end of each chapter.

This survey process will give you an overview of the chapter.

- **Question.** Approach each chapter by tackling one major section at a time. Before you actually read a section, reread its learning objectives questions. But don't stop there; add a few questions of your own as you glance over the section's subtitles and key terms. Asking questions helps focus your reading. By using words like *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*; turn each heading into a question.
- **Read and Underline.** Keeping the learning objective questions in mind, read the section and note the examples provided to help you understand major concepts. Once you have grasped the text's examples, try to generate some of your own. Read each figure or table to which the authors direct your attention. If you don't understand a figure or table, reread the relevant text and look at the figure or table again. Look at the photos and read the captions as well. Read the section first, and then go back to the beginning and *underline, highlight, or mark the material*. Speed reading should not be used for technical material because important details might be missed. Do not be afraid to move your lips or read aloud. Critical reading may require you to reread items several times to completely understand a sentence or passage.

Suggestions for marking your textbook

- A. Underline after reading. Read the paragraph or a section of the text and then *go back and underline only the main points.* Do not underline the first time you read the material.
 - B. Use numbers for the following:
 1. lists
 2. enumerations
 3. sequences
 - C. Vertical lines. Place **vertical lines** in the margin to emphasize main points of several lines.
 - D. Asterisks*. Use **asterisks** for main points and for other important points or ideas that may be important.
 - E. Recall phrases. Place **recall** phrases in the margin to condense major points and provide supporting details. Summaries and questions may also be placed in the margin.
 - F. Definitions and examples. Underline all definitions. Write “def.” in the margin. Put () parentheses around examples. If you underline or highlight the entire example, your page will be a mass of yellow and your purpose for marking will be lost.
 - G. Circles or boxes. Some students like to circle ○ important concepts, ideas, or subheadings. Others prefer to use a box ■.
 - H. Highlighting. **Highlight** the points underlined or highlight in place of underlining. Use a felt tip pen. Yellow is often preferred.
 - I. ??!. React to what you read. Agree, disagree, question! Stay involved with the ideas in the text.
 - J. Practice. Like any skill, practice is the best way to learn. Would you be confident that you could drive a car after simply listening to a lecture? Show your instructor a sample of your “markings” until you are confident you are selecting the most important material in each paragraph.
- **Recite.** Write a short summary of the material. Your summary should answer the learning objective question. Compare your summary with the answers for the learning objective questions that are provided in the summary at the end of the chapter. If necessary, reread the selection. Recite means “say out loud”.
 - **Review.** As you finish each section, turn to the chapter review and try to answer the questions that pertain to it. If you cannot, review those parts of the section that you found the most difficult to recall or understand and then answer the questions again. Check your answers against the key provided at the back of the book. When you have finished the entire chapter, go over the summary and key terms. If you don’t know the meaning of a term, turn to the page where that term is defined in the margin. The marginal definitions provide a ready reference for the terms that appear in **boldface** print in the text. All of these terms and definitions also appear in the end-of-text *glossary*. Finally, complete the remaining sections of the study guide.