

SQ4R Reading Tip Sheet

(survey, question, read, restate, record, review)

SQ4R is a mnemonic device to help you remember the steps of this reading process. This process is especially helpful for getting started on a chapter or an article and will help provide an organized way to understand the material, and to retain what you read.

Survey

To survey means to look over or to skim.

1. Look at the number of pages you will be reading (this is partly for knowing how much time to set aside to read.) Number the paragraphs, so you can easily find sections you include in your notes.
2. Look at the information that stands out: Title, sub-titles, charts, graphs, illustrations, parts of text that are underlined or in bold, a glossary (list of words the author has defined for you). Notice transitions at the beginnings of paragraphs: first, second, finally, in fact, on the other hand, this is because, another reason, etc. Transitions show you how information is linked and what kind of information is included.
3. Notice what help the text offers. Chapters in textbooks often have a review section at the end with a summary of the chapter and questions. If you read those sections first, it will help you know what is most important in the chapter and you can use them for the next part of the process. Sometimes there is a glossary where you can find the definitions of important, new, or technical words.

Question

1. Ask Questions! Do this because you have been answering questions all of your life and when you ask yourself a question, your brain gets into gear to find the answer.
2. Turn the title of the chapter or article into a question, then read to answer that question. Do the same with the subheads.
3. What does the author want you to know? Who wrote the text and why? What qualifications or expertise or special viewpoint does the author have?
4. Know why you are reading. What are you trying to find out? How does this information fit in with what you are learning? If there are questions at the end of a chapter, look for the answers to those questions. If your assignment includes questions, look for those answers.

Read

1. Read a section at a time. (A paragraph or, if the text is especially hard, a sentence at a time.) Read with the intention of completely understanding the section you are reading. Don't leave anything to do later.
2. Look up the words you don't know and write them on the page, in your notes or on flashcards. Don't skip them and don't guess.
3. When you finish the section, summarize the section. When you finish the whole text, summarize the whole text.

Restate

1. Talk to yourself about the text. Summarize. Stop at the end of each paragraph or section, cover the section with your hand, and summarize it entirely in your own words. A summary is the main idea of that section. If there is something about it you can picture, do that. Could you explain the ideas in that paragraph to an 8-year-old? If you can't, reread and clarify, then try again.
2. Talk back to the text. What do you think of this author's ideas? How does the text relate to what you already knew or thought? What else does it make you think about? How might you use or refer to these ideas in a class discussion or assignment? Evaluate the author's logic and how that logic was presented.

Record (if you haven't been doing it)

1. Write your short summary of each paragraph in the margin or your notes — just a sentence or a few words.
2. Write your thoughts about what you are reading.
3. Write a synonym for each word you looked up, so that it is there when you review your notes.

Review

1. Reread your summaries of each paragraph and revise your notes for clarity soon after you read.
2. Return to your notes the next day and try to remember the key parts of what you read without looking, then check your notes (or flashcards) to see if you are right. This testing is a great way to learn. After a few days, go back to those same notes (and notes you have added since then) and test yourself again. Keep that up through the whole semester.

The Curve of Forgetting

