

# Tips for Writers • Reading Strategies

## SQ3R Method for Thorough Study<sup>1</sup>

Step 1: SURVEY -	<p>Look over material critically. Skim through the book and read topical and subtopical headings and sentences. Read the summaries at the end of chapters and books. Try to anticipate what the author is going to say.</p> <p>WRITE these notes on paper, in sequence; then look over the jottings to get an overall idea or picture. This will enable you to see where you are going.</p>
Step 2: QUESTIONS -	<p>Instead of reading paragraph headings such as “Basic Concepts of Reading,” change to read, “What are the Basic Concepts of Reading?” These questions will become “hooks” on which to hang the reading material.</p> <p>WRITE these questions out; look over the questions to see the emphasis and direction; then attempt to give plausible answers before further reading.</p>
Step 3: READ -	<p>Read with smoothness and alertness to answer the questions. Use all the techniques and principles demonstrated in class.</p> <p>WRITE notes, in your own words, under each question. Take a minimum number of notes-use these notes as a skeleton.</p>
Step 4: RECALL**-	<p>Without looking at your book or notes, mentally visualize and sketch, in your own words, the high points of the material immediately upon completing the reading.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This forces you to check understanding.</li> <li>This channels the material into a natural and usable form.</li> <li>This points up what you do not understand.</li> <li>This forces you to think.</li> </ol> <p>**Note: More time should be spent on recall than on reading.</p>
Step 5: REVIEW -	<p>Look at your questions, answers, notes and book to see how well you did recall. Observe carefully the points stated incorrectly or omitted. Fix carefully in mind the logical sequence of the entire idea, concepts, or problem. Finish up with a mental picture of the WHOLE.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from F.P. Robinson. *Effective Study*. New York: Harper and Bros. 1946. Chapter II.  
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(see back for more tips on reading strategies)

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## Active Reading Strategies

- **Ask yourself pre-reading questions.** For example: What is the topic, and what do you already know about it? Why has the instructor assigned this reading at this point in the semester?
- **Identify and define any unfamiliar terms.**
- **Bracket the main idea or thesis of the reading, and put an asterisk next to it.** Pay particular attention to the introduction or opening paragraphs to locate this information.
- **Put down your highlighter. Make marginal notes or comments instead.** Every time you feel the urge to highlight something, write instead. You can summarize the text, ask questions, give assent, protest vehemently. You can also write down key words to help you recall where important points are discussed. Above all, strive to enter into a dialogue with the author.
- **Write questions in the margins, and then answer the questions in a reading journal or on a separate piece of paper.** If you're reading a textbook, try changing all the titles, subtitles, sections and paragraph headings into questions. For example, the section heading "The Gas Laws of Boyle, Charles, and Avogadro" might become "What are the gas laws of Boyle, Charles, and Avogadro?"
- **Make outlines, flow charts, or diagrams that help you to map and to understand ideas visually.**
- **Read each paragraph carefully and then determine "what it says" and "what it does."** Answer "what it says" in only one sentence. Represent the main idea of the paragraph in your own words. To answer "what it does," describe the paragraph's purpose within the text, such as "provides evidence for the author's first main reason" or "introduces an opposing view."
- **Write a summary of an essay or chapter in your own words.** Do this in less than a page. Capture the essential ideas and perhaps one or two key examples. This approach offers a great way to be sure that you know what the reading really says or is about.
- **Write your own exam question based on the reading.**
- **Teach what you have learned to someone else!** Research clearly shows that teaching is one of the most effective ways to learn. If you try to explain aloud what you have been studying, (1) you'll transfer the information from short-term to long-term memory, and (2) you'll quickly discover what you understand – and what you don't.

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