

Reading to Remember

The SQ3R Method of Study



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Reading is one of the core activities of study. You need to be able to understand what you read and to be able to recall the main ideas when you need them. You can use the SQ3R method to help you remember a reading for tutorials, seminars or to revise for exams.

S = Survey

Before you start to read, SURVEY the material to gain an overview of the contents.

Approach a reading by scanning the title(s), subheading and any summaries or abstracts. Doing this will help you gain an idea of the main idea or topic of the piece. You may also find that you get some idea of the author's position.

Q = Question

Your reading will be more memorable if you QUESTION the material.

1. Ask yourself:

- What did my lecturer/ tutor say about this chapter or subject?
- What do I already know about this subject?

2. Devise questions that will guide your reading:

- Think about specific questions that you need to, or would like to find answers for.
- Read any focus questions at the end of the reading.
- If there are headings in the material, turn the headings into questions. For example, if the heading is Qualitative and Quantitative Research, your question might be: 'What is the difference between these two types of research?'

3. Make a list of your questions

You will use them during revision to help you remember what you have read.

R1 = Read

Be prepared to READ material twice. First, read without making notes:

1. Look for the author's plan. Read any headings, abstracts or summaries. This will give you an idea of the main thesis.
2. Look for answers to the questions you first raised.
3. Compare diagrams and illustrations with the written text. Often you will understand more from them.
4. Make sure you understand what you are reading. Reduce your reading speed for difficult passages. Stop and reread parts which are not clear.
5. If you have difficulty understanding a text, look up difficult words in the dictionary or glossary of terms and reread. If the meaning of a word or passage still evades you, leave it and read on. Perhaps after more reading you will find it more accessible and the meaning will become clear. Speak to your tutor if your difficulty continues.
6. Question the author's reasoning. Is each point justified? Is there enough evidence? What is it?

7. Use personal experience as a memory aid. When the author makes a claim, reflect on your own experience to support or disprove it. This will help you remember and understand. But keep in mind that you are using personal experience only as a memory aid—it is not sufficient to prove or refute a research finding!

On your second reading, begin to take notes:

1. Note down the main idea(s) of each paragraph. This is often the first or last sentence.
2. Look for important details (supporting evidence, written illustrations of points, provisions or alternatives). Examples can be good cues for your memory.
3. Take notes from the text, but write information in your own words.
4. In your notes, underline or highlight the important points. This will be useful for later revision.

R2 = Recall

You should now try to RECALL what you have read.

1. Close the book.
2. Make notes of what you remember.
3. Check their accuracy against the notes you made during your reading.
4. Return to the reading. Read one section at a time and try to RECALL what you have read. It can also be helpful to RECITE ideas aloud to help you remember.

R3 = Review

Now REVIEW what you have read.

At the end of your study period:

Check the accuracy of your notes against the original material (if you have underlined the main points, this should be simple!). This is an important part of the process because it can really help you remember what you have studied.

The next day:

1. Read through your notes to reacquaint yourself with the main points.
2. Now read through the questions you noted down and try to answer them from memory.
3. Try doing the same thing after a few days.

Periodically reviewing notes will help you at exam time. The more you revise throughout semester, the less you will need to cram during exam study periods.