

## SQ4R Informational Text Reading Technique

Have you ever dutifully read your assigned chapter from beginning to end and then promptly forgotten most of the information in the chapter? It happens more than you would like to admit, right? Learning from your textbooks involves much more than just reading over words on a page. Textbooks may disguise themselves as regular books, but they are so much more. Textbooks are an organized storehouse of immense amounts of information. By unlocking this organized system, you can make your textbooks work *for* you.

Good reading skills are important for academic success, but how do you increase your levels of understanding and retention of what you read? Textbook reading is an **active** process that requires all of your focused energy in order to get the most out of it. One proven active reading method is called SQ4R. It is an easy to remember mnemonic: the S stands for Survey, Q for question, and 4Rs are for read, recite, rephrase, and review.

### Survey to find main ideas.

Begin by reading over the chapter's **objectives**. Next, read the chapter's **title, headings** and **subheadings**. Preview all of the **charts, pictures and graphs** (if any), and finally, and possibly most importantly, **read the chapter summary**. Most good textbooks will have a summary that outlines the chapter in a very "readable" way – without all of the jargon that was included in the chapter itself. Learning and understanding are more effective when you know the main points. Previewing is extremely important. It not only provides you with the basic framework and structure for the details that follow but previewing or **surveying** also helps you to ease your brain into studying.

### Question to provide purpose for reading.

A common problem that occurs while reading is mind wandering, which certainly interferes with comprehension. A good way to maintain focus while reading is to **turn** the chapter's **headings** and **subheadings into questions**. Ask yourself *who, what, when, where, why, and how* questions. The Question step is a powerful technique because it accomplishes several things. First, it can help generate interest in topics where there was no interest previously. Secondly, it provides your brain with direction and purpose for reading. Your mind absorbs and remembers material for which it has been primed with questions before reading.

### Read for comprehension.

All of the preparations you have made by surveying the assignment and developing questions will pay off during this step. Read one section of your assignment at a time and, as you do, look for **answers** to the **questions** that you formulated. **Reading actively** to answer specific questions will increase your reading rate and will increase your comprehension of the material. Authors of textbooks often include many details and examples to help clarify main ideas. Do not become overwhelmed with all the extra information. Try to focus on **identifying** the **main ideas** and **underline** them.

## Recite for increased understanding.

Reciting information helps you to concentrate as you read; it also helps to solidify understanding of the material read. After you complete reading each section, try to **answer the questions aloud from memory**. If you cannot answer the questions from memory, then you know that you need to reread that particular section.

## Rephrase to make the information your own.

Writing notes in your own words helps you start to move new information from short term to long term memory. After you recite answers to your questions from memory, **write brief summaries or outlines** of each section from memory. This helps you to not only be certain that you understand what you have read, but that you also are on your way to remembering it.

## Review for retention.

Reviewing within 24 hours of first reading new material helps you move this information into long-term memory. We **learn best through repetition**. Answer the questions that you formulated again from memory. If you have forgotten the answer, reread that particular section, focusing on the question you formulated and the answer you underlined.

SQ4R seems like an involved process, but just like with any skill, the more you practice, the better you will get. By applying this strategy to reading your textbooks, you can become a more efficient, more effective reader.