



A Reading and Remembering Guide

Many college freshmen find reading assignments to be the most difficult to handle. Francis P. Robinson has devised a simple, five-step system for developing higher level study skills that promotes faster and more meaningful reading, makes it easier to prepare for quizzes, and results in appreciable higher course grades. The system is called the SQ3R Method.

1. First, survey the reading assignment quickly, taking no more than 5 minutes to glance over the whole assignment. Read the introductory and summary paragraphs, inspect all illustrations and tables, and check the headings and subheadings. They will reveal the important points to be presented and indicate how these points are related.
2. Second, close the book and ask yourself the following question: “What are the main points that the author is trying to tell me?” Early identification of these will aid you in preparing for later examinations. Now, open the book and make a question out of the first heading. This will arouse your curiosity and thereby increase comprehension. Turning a heading into a question can be done at the instant of reading the heading, but it demands a conscious effort on your part. Doing this will also bring to mind information that is already known.
3. Third, read the section to answer the question. This is not just passive plodding along each line, but an active search for the answer. Underline or highlight key words and phrases to aid you in recall. Emphasize the most important points with a star, asterisk or other mark placed to the page margin. Also, place question marks in the page margin to identify the most likely test questions.
4. After reading and marking the first section, look away from the book and try briefly to recite the answer to your question. Use your own words and cite an example where appropriate. If you can do this, you know what is in the book; if you cannot, glance over the section again. One good way to do your reciting from memory is to jot down brief cue phrases in outline form on a sheet of paper.
5. Now, repeat steps 2, 3, and 4 with each successive headed section: that is, turn the next heading into a question, read actively to answer that question, and recite the answer by jotting down cue phrases in outline form. Read in this manner until the entire chapter has been completed.
6. When the chapter has been read and marked in this way, review your markings to get an overview of the major points and their relationships and check your memory of the content by reciting the major subpoints under each heading. This checking of memory can be done by covering up each section and trying to recall the main points.

When polished into a smooth and efficient procedure, the five steps of the SQ3R Method – survey, question, read, recite, review – should *result in faster reading, Picking out the important points, and fixing them in memory.*

The student will also receive one other worthwhile benefit:

Examination questions will likely seem familiar because the headings turned into questions are usually the points that are emphasized on the tests. *By predicting actual test questions and looking up the answers beforehand,* the student will find that he is effectively studying what is considered to be important in the course.

Rapid forgetting seems to plague almost everyone. There are, however, a few simple *rules* that you can follow to *help retard forgetting.*

1. First, make sure that you understand the material you are studying. Material that is meaningful to you will be better remembered than things that are unclear.
2. Second, study frequently in short periods rather than trying to learn everything all at once.
3. Third, restate key points in your own words. Write them out or say them to yourself. You will be required to do this on examinations and you might as well learn how to express important concepts in your own words right from the start. Also, expressing the main points in your own words will make it much easier to remember them later.
4. Fourth, learn to use memory cues. Develop a system for employing key words and symbols to remind you of important details. When reading a textbook try to find a key word or phrase that symbolizes for you the main point in each paragraph. Use underlining or highlighting, outline numbering, marginal symbols, marginal notes, etc...to help you reconstruct all the important ideas without having to reread the entire chapter.
5. Finally, practice using the SQ3R Method until it seems the natural way for you to study your reading assignments.

For further assistance please visit the Learning Commons, Pelletier Library Main floor.

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