

SQ3R

Step 1 “S” for SURVEY

First, SURVEY the reading assignment quickly, taking no more than five minutes to glance over a whole chapter. Check the heading and sub-headings – they represent the author’s outline and make it easy for you to follow his organization of ideas. Inspect all graphs, maps, tables, diagrams and pictures – they are included because they clearly summarize, in a more visible and tangible way, many facts and relationships that would otherwise require hundreds of words. Read the introductory and summary paragraphs – they point out the important points to look for as you read and how these concepts are related to each other. Making such a preview will orient you to what the chapter is all about before you study it in detail.

Step 2 “Q” for QUESTION

Second, arouse your curiosity about the material by asking yourself the following QUESTION: “What are the main points that the author is trying to tell me?” Then, as you read, convert heading and subheadings into who, what, where, when, why and how questions and read to find the answers to these questions. Challenging yourself to find answers to such questions will help you maintain interest in what you are reading and will aid you in evaluating the significance of what you are reading.

Step 3 “R” is for READ

Third, READ the assignment carefully for meaning. When you read, do not read passively as you would an adventure story. Such novels are for entertainment and are written without any concern for whether or not you remember details. Read actively! Underline key words and phrases to aid you in recalling the main points of the chapter. Use an asterisk, exclamation point or question mark to indicate an important definition, a key formula, or a potential test question. Summarize key ideas in your own words in the page margin of the book. Remember, such active participation in the reading process will increase your understanding of the material being read.

Step 4 “R” for RECITE

Fourth, stop at appropriate intervals and RECITE to yourself from memory the main points of the assignment, recalling only the essential details to understand what the author is trying to say. Using the study guides provided for history lessons helps this process! Without looking at the book, check whether you have learned the major concepts by trying to restate them in your own words. If you cannot do this immediately after reading the material, you cannot hope to do it in class or on an exam. Such self-recitation provides a way to test yourself quickly and easily to reveal what you have learned. If you can’t repeat most of the main points, then you haven’t learned the material and you will simply have to reread it again if you are to master the material.

Step 5 “R” is for REVIEW

Finally, REVIEW the chapter at periodic intervals to refresh your memory and make the facts stick. Don’t wait until you are confronted with an exam to do your reviewing. That remains a good time for the final review, but not for the first review. Reviewing is simply the process of going over the material again in order to fix it in your memory. Reread your marginal notes and underline and say over again the sequence of main ideas and supporting facts until you have them once more firmly in mind. Research has clearly demonstrated that the best time to review material is shortly after you have learned it. It is most important, therefore, that you not omit this review immediately after learning. You will, of course, want to review the material again just before a test.