



# SQ3R Textbook Study System

Tips for effective textbook studying .....

Effective studying of textbooks requires a system of gathering information, organizing it, and employing proven techniques to recite and review the material regularly for the exam. The SQ3R system is one way that will help you be more successful.

**STEP ONE: SURVEY**—Fix the name of the chapter in your mind. It is the essence of the main idea you are trying to get from the chapter.

**Quickly read the introduction, outline, and objectives of a chapter.** They supply background information needed to recognize the purpose of a chapter. Secondly, they may state specifically the mode of development the author intends to follow. Both are important for faster reading speed and greater understanding of how ideas fit together.

**Pay attention to headings and sub-headings.** Well-written college textbooks are divided into sections; each headed by large, bold print. The title names the major topic to be presented and indicates that the author thinks this idea is very important. There may be several sub-headings under main headings. Sub-headings signal important details in the chapter.

**Look at other clues to important ideas.** This will help those who say, "I never know what is important" or "I can't tell main points from minor ones". Authors indicate which points are important for you! Frequently, there are clues such as **bold print**, *italics*, numbered items, **color coded passages**, marginal notes, glossaries, outlines, questions, lists, charts, etc.

**Read the summary** to see which ideas the author restates for special emphasis or what conclusions are drawn. *A summary contains only the main ideas in a chapter.*

**Look over words in the list of important terms** at the beginning or end of chapters. These are key ideas that you must understand in order to learn the material in a chapter.

**STEP TWO: QUESTIONS**—Make questions out of headings and subheadings. For example, if the first heading in a chapter is "*The Judiciary and the Constitutional Courts*," skim the details as a guide to the kinds of questions you can make. If the details provide definitions, form the questions, "*What is the Judiciary*" and "*What are the Constitutional Courts?*" If the details explain characteristics of the relationship, a question could be "*What are # (a number) characteristics of the relationship between the Judicial and the Constitutional Courts?*" Using abbreviations, the question may be condensed to:

**"What are # chars. of rela. betw. The Jud. & Const. Courts?"**

If, for example, there is a marginal note, "*The Need for Constitutional Courts*," your question could be "What is the need for Constitutional Courts?"

**STEP THREE: READ** — While holding the question clearly in mind, read the details to answer your question. Doing this creates a clearly defined purpose for reading, i.e., to find answers to questions. Positive results are greater concentration and it reduces the "Blank Mind Syndrome" where you can't recall what you just read. You will gain skill in recognizing important detail and supporting arguments as you read. Making questions and answers increases memory at test time.

**STEP FOUR: RECITE**—Reciting properly is the most important step to prevent forgetting.

Look at a question you have made.

Without looking, recite the answer aloud to the question that you made. Answer fully as if you are lecturing a class. The key to success lies in reciting the answer aloud or writing it out. Another way to increase learning and recall is to write the answer down in the form of an outline, short paragraph, a chart, diagram, formula, etc.

Check your answer by referring to your notes or the book. Reciting is a guard against the risky assumption that an answer has been learned. Many students are satisfied with the feeling of understanding an answer and never get around to testing the state of their actual learning. Therefore, many students go into exams feeling they know the material but not knowing for certain if the material has been learned until they get the exam back.

Recitation requires mental activities far beyond those possible through "stroking words with eyeballs" in a textbook: a technique so commonly used by students. Reciting promotes and speeds learning while rereading and rereading actually slows, impedes, and in some cases, prevents learning.

Repeat the *Question-Read-Recite* process for the successive headings in the chapter.

STEP FIVE: REVIEW—Very few people on this planet can remember the content of a whole chapter by reading it once. The Question-Read-Recite process divides a chapter into sections that can be assimilated separately, piece-by-piece. This allows a student to move at a pace they find best for learning. Regular review puts a chapter back together again. In review, you are answering the question that was made from the chapter title which, in our example, was "What is the Judiciary and how does it work?"

Review means regular and frequent recitation of the material to be learned. This is an excellent check for learning and can eliminate entering an exam "feeling" that the material has been learned when it might not have been.

A natural objection to SQ3R is that it is slow. It is slower than simply reading but it is a solution to the problem characterized by the timeworn complaints of "*I can't remember what I just read*" or after a poor grade is returned on an exam, "*Darn. I thought I knew that.*"

That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way.

-- Doris Lessing