SQ4R
Read Faster and Remember More

Seattle Central Community College
Student Academic Assistance
TRiO
Room 1102B1
Tel. (206) 587-3852
www.seattlecentral.org/academic-assistance

HOURS
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Booklets
Managing Your Time… Study… Work… Play
Using the parts of the Text
How To Take Tests
Different Kinds of Tests
How to Take Lecture Notes
How To Write a Term Paper
SQ4R: How to Read Faster and Remember More
How To Give An Oral Report
How To Read a Math Textbook

Live Workshops
Take Great Notes
Write a Great Essay
Managing Stress
Improve Your Memory
Building Self-Esteem
Managing Your Time

…and more!

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What is SQ4R?

SQ4R is a method used to read textbooks that will help you not only read the text better, but more importantly, help you understand and remember the content. The process follows a series of steps:
Here is how the method works:

### SURVEY

Before you begin reading, skim or SURVEY, the material.

1.) Read the first sentence of each paragraph and the summary or conclusions. **DO NOT READ OTHER SENTENCES!**

2.) Read the title of the chapter, each boldface section heading, the introduction and summary, and look at any illustrations.

   What is the chapter about?
   What major topics are included?
   What are key words or ideas?

3.) Move your eyes quickly down the page.

4.) Do not spend more than an average of 30 seconds per page.

### QUESTIONING

Once you have surveyed or skimmed the chapter, turn back to the first section and begin QUESTIONING. To begin, you will need to convert the heading and subheadings into questions. This will help you identify the main ideas as you read the chapter.

**EXAMPLE HEADING:** ELEMENTS OF A PERSUASIVE SPEECH  
**QUESTION:** What are the elements of a persuasive speech?

**SUBHEADING:** MAKE A THESIS STATEMENT  
**QUESTION:** How is a thesis statement written?
Learning to read using the SQ4R method will save you time in the long run. On average, spend no more than 1.5 hours for your assignment. However, you may find that you need to spend more time on one subject and less time on another.

For a 20-page reading assignment, you will spend:

- 2 minutes previewing
- 5 minutes skimming
- 2 minutes jotting down questions
- 30-45 minutes reading
- 5-10 minutes reciting
- 10 minutes reviewing
- 5-10 minutes reflecting

One last hint:

If an assignment is especially long, divide it and use the SQ4R method on one section at a time until you are finished. Try not to read for more than one or one-and-a-half hours without a break.

It is at this step when you begin to READ the section and look for answers to the question(s) you developed from the headings.

Keep a pencil in your hand and only underline the main ideas (not each and every detail - or you will wind up underlining the whole book!)

Ask yourself:

What is the writer trying to get me to think or do?
What are the facts or opinions?

Remember to:
- Read captions under pictures, charts, graphs, or maps.
- Look for answers to the questions you have developed.
- Note all the underlined, italicized, or bold printed words or phrases.
- Study graphic aids.
- Reduce your speed for difficult passages.

If there are ideas you do not understand, put a question mark in the margin.

If there are words you do not understand, underline or circle the word and put a question mark by it.
In order to improve your memory, RECITE what you have read so far by testing your comprehension about the main ideas.

Close your book or look away and answer the question(s) you wrote down from the headings and subheadings.

**Hint:** If your instructor gave you homework questions, try to answer those without looking at the book.

**Step 1.** Think the question.
**Example:** How is a thesis statement written?

**Step 2.** Answer in your own words.
**Example:** A thesis statement is a single sentence that tells the readers what your essay is about.

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU USE YOUR OWN WORDS TO ANSWER THE QUESTION TO ENSURE YOU HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE READING.**

**Step 3.** If you find you cannot answer the question, you may need to revise your original question.

**For example:**
- **Original question:** How is a thesis statement written?
- **New question:** What makes a good thesis statement?
- **New answer:** A good thesis statement should tell readers the main topic and your attitude or argument about why the reader should care about the topic.

The next step is to REVIEW what you remember and learn what you missed.

1. Return to the beginning of the section you have been reading.
2. Let your eyes rest briefly on all sentences but don't read every word.
3. Using your finger or a pencil as your guide, quickly skim the page. (Remember, your eyes should follow your finger or pencil - not the reverse).
4. If you had trouble finding answers to the questions you posed, read those parts more carefully.
5. Check the places in the reading where you put question marks.
   - Do you now understand the idea?
   - Do you understand the meaning of words you did not know without looking them up in the dictionary?
6. Take extra time to look words up in the dictionary
7. Write down any remaining questions for your instructor.