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Boost Your Skills

SQ3R: A Reading Technique

How to Hit the Books

SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review. It is a proven technique to sharpen textbook reading skills. In college, you'll frequently be assigned multiple chapters for several different courses in books that can be quite complicated. SQ3R helps make reading purposeful and meaningful, so that you use your time most effectively. Here's how this strategy works:

Survey

Get an idea of what the chapter is about by reviewing the highlights:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read the title, headings, and subheadings | <input type="checkbox"/> Read captions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take note of words that are italicized or bold | <input type="checkbox"/> Read the very beginning and end of the chapter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Look at charts, graphs, pictures, maps, and other visual material | |

Question

As you survey the text, ask a question for each section. Ask what, why, how, when, who and where questions as they relate to the content. You can create questions by:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turning the title, headings, or subheadings into questions | <input type="checkbox"/> Rewriting the questions at the end of the chapter or after each subheading in your own words |
|---|---|

Write down your questions. Questions help you pay attention, understand the text better, and recall the information more easily later on.

Read

Read one section of a chapter at a time, actively looking for an answer to your question for that section. Pay attention to bold and italicized text that authors use to make important points. Be sure to review everything in the section, including tables, graphs, and illustrations, as these features can communicate an idea more powerfully than written text.

Recite

At the end of each section, look up from the text and in your own words recite an answer to your question for that section. Then write down your answer. Be sure to provide examples that support it.

Now repeat Question, Read, and Recite steps for each section of the chapter or assigned reading. First ask a question for the next section. Then read to find the answer. Finally, recite the answer in your own words and jot it down. The written questions and answers will help you study in the future.

Review

After completing each chapter or reading assignment, review your notes. Identify the main points of the reading by looking for the most important idea in each section. Recite, or write, a brief summary of the chapter or assignment. Review your study notes every week to help you remember the information. When it's time to study for your tests, you'll find you've created an invaluable guide.