

SQ4R Method

Designed to help process and increase retention of written information, the SQ4R method consists of 6 steps that help to guide you through your textbook and other written information. One drawback to this method is that it adds times to what you normally set aside for reading your textbooks. The end benefit is increased understanding of written material and more efficient studying. This can be well worth the learning process.

Steps

1. Survey (S):

Scan the textbook or written material to establish its purpose and/or to get the main ideas. This can include skipping to the summary at the end of a chapter and reading the main points and looking at the questions. The purpose of this is to get a “big picture” idea of what the material is about. While surveying the material look at:

- a. Titles and Headings – these indicate the main topics and concepts
- b. Pictures, questions, bold or italicized print – these emphasize important information
- c. Introduction and Conclusion – may summarize the topics and the purpose of the material
- d. Footnotes – they may provide extra information for your benefit

2. Question (Q):

Before reading the material create questions based on what you observed during the first step. These questions can be based on:

- a. Titles and Headings
- b. Pictures and bold or italicized print
- c. Introduction and Conclusion
- d. Footnotes
- e. First sentence of a paragraph

For example, the title “The First Law of Thermodynamics” can become “What is the first law of thermodynamics?”

3. Read (R#1)

Actively read the text, meaning do not skim through it or passively glance it over. In this step you are trying to find the answer to your questions. One important point on this step is to make sure you are not trying to find the answer only. This may cause you to miss out on other important information.

If you have a question for each section of the chapter or reading, read only that section then move on to step 4. If not, keep reading until you've read the information relating to your questions.

One last note on this step – do not write down the answer to your question yet. That comes in step 5.

4. Respond (R#2)

After you've read the section, without looking at the text and in your own words, try to answer your question(s) you made. If you can answer them correctly move on to step 5.

If you are unable to answer the question(s) reread that section until you can. If after 2-3 tries you are still not able to answer the question, go on to the next couple of sections and see if it becomes clearer. You may find in this step that you need to change your question. For example, the question "What is the first law of thermodynamics?" for the subtitle "The First Law of Thermodynamics" might not be answered in that section. Instead, a better question might be "Where is the first law of thermodynamics applied?"

Because subtitles are often ambiguous, the questions you create may not be relevant and that is okay. Change these as needed, but make sure that you really need to first. In other words, do not change the question just so you can answer it.

If you are still unable to answer the question(s) or are having a hard time understanding the section, please contact your professor, a tutor through the Center for Academic Resources, or the Reading & Study Skills Center for more help.

5. Record (R#3)

Once you know the material and are able to answer the question(s), the next step is to record what you have learned. This can be done in multiple ways and is based on your preference:

- a. Highlighting the information
- b. Make notes in the margins
- c. Take notes on a separate piece of paper
- d. A combination of these

6. Review (R#4)

Reviewing the material on a consistent basis is an effective study strategy that is often overlooked. Many students will review the material once or twice before an exam, but not on a weekly basis leading up to it.

It is best to review the material weekly as it will help you remember more of the information longer. This means that you are reviewing what you already know versus relearning the material before an exam. This can also have other positive benefits such as decreased study time before an exam and increased confidence because you already know the material.

One recommendation for your weekly reviews is to start from the beginning of the course in each session. Although it may seem like this will add time because there will be more material to review, it will only add a few minutes to each review session. The reason for this is that as the semester progresses the amount of time needed to review older material decreases since you will already know it and only need to skim over it to recall main points.