

SQ3R: How to take Textbook Notes

Learning how to read and take textbook notes is critical to school success at middle school, junior high, high school, and college. One method that fits with Cornell note taking is commonly referred to as SQ3R, that stands for survey (or skim), question, read, recite, and review. Here is how this strategy can help.

S = Survey the entire reading selection, briefly.

1. Skim or scan the first to last pages and look for:
 - a. Main headings and subheadings and the relationships between the two.
 - b. Pictures, graphs, and charts. Think about what they tell you about the purpose of the chapter and what you will be reading.
 - c. Questions at the "end" or summaries, which let you know what the author thinks is most important in the chapter.
 - d. Organization and format of the particular selection.
2. Review, if necessary, so you have a good sense of what this chapter or selection is about.

Q = Question by turning the headings into questions. Write the question in the left-hand margin of your Cornell notes before you begin to read the section. The question will help you by

1. Arousing your curiosity.
2. Bringing to mind information you already know;
3. Helping you understand the section more quickly;
4. Making important points stand out for explanatory details.

R = Read so as to answer you questions. Read actively by:

1. Looking for main ideas and supporting evidence.
2. Paying attention to the structure and relationship between ideas by focusing on key words such as:
 - a. More of the same: also, more, moreover, likewise, again, furthermore, and in addition.
 - b. Chang in ideas: but, although, yet nevertheless, despite, in spite of however.
 - c. Conclusions: so, thus, therefore, in summary, consequently, accordingly, in conclusion, hence.
3. Looking up new and key words in the glossary or dictionary and writing the definition in your notes.
4. Understanding the graphs and figures.

R = Recite while reading the text.

1. After reading the first section, look away from the book and try to answer your question; give an example
2. Write your answer in your own words in the right hand column of your notes.
 - a. Write just enough to jog your memory. (Experiment with how much you need to write: too much and you won't take time to review; too little and you won't remember what was said.)
 - b. Define new terms or copy a graph.
 - c. Underline key phrases and words.
3. Repeat the process until you have finished reading the chapter or selection.

R = Review.

1. Re-skim the entire chapter after you have finished reading it.
 2. Take five minutes to reread your notes. Be sure you understand the main ideas and their relationships to each other. Reread any part of the text, if you don't understand your notes.
 3. Using your questions in the left-hand margin, ask yourself your question and recite the answers you've written without looking at your notes.
 4. Answer the questions at the end of the chapter. If you can't, review your notes again and add missing information to your notes to complete the answers.
 5. Review your notes every few days to avoid forgetting and having to cram for the test.
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