

ACTIVE READING



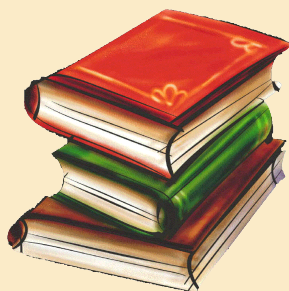
THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVE READING

When I tell students that a full-time student taking 15 credit hours should spend 30-60 hours on coursework outside of class, they are astonished! However, students who spend ample time preparing for class and reviewing course materials are more likely to attain their academic goals.

As a college student, you may be required to read several hundred pages in course materials each week. Students who use effective strategies to read critically and comprehensively are more likely to enjoy their courses and to be successful in college and beyond academic settings. Students should be prepared to read their text before class, review the chapters after each class, and again in preparation for exams or other assessments.

Contrary to popular belief, just because you are engaged in the act of reading does not mean that you are comprehending. Most of us have sat down to read a textbook chapter from start to finish, and then realized that we could not recall any details of the chapter that we just spent hours reading! This resource offers proven strategies for active reading that will help you perform more efficiently and achieve the following objectives:

- Learn proven techniques for active and critical reading.
- Learn to read according to the purpose of your assignment.
- Use SQ3R for reading textbooks, articles, tests, and other materials.



“Books were my pass to personal freedom. I learned to read at age three, and soon discovered there was a whole world to conquer that went beyond our farm in Mississippi.”

—Oprah Winfrey

Vocabulary

SQ3R: SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. It is a reading strategy that can be used with textbooks, articles, tests, and other reading materials.

Purposeful reading: It is important to adapt your reading event according to purpose.

SQ3R

Whether you are reading for class or reading for enjoyment, the SQ3R method is an active reading strategy designed to transform any student into a better reader. SQ3R stands for:

Survey: Previewing the material prior to reading to learn about what is being covered.

Question: Creating questions about the headings scanned and about what you already know about the topic. The process of creating questions engages you in active learning.

Read: Reading the material to answer the questions created in the Q-stage and to understand the main idea of the material.

Recite: Answering the questions created in the Q-stage and stating (in writing or verbally) other details about the key points in the text.

Review: Using a variety of techniques to learn the material in preparation for an exam.

VOCABULARY

Back Matter

Index, glossary, references

Chapter Elements

Title, section introductions and conclusions, boldfaced or italicized terms, pictures and charts, summaries, side-bar features, margin information, review questions

Front Matter

Introduction, preface, table of contents

Skimming

Rapid, superficial reading of material to determine central ideas and main elements.

Scanning

Reading material in an investigative way to search for specific information.



Surveying

At the beginning of the semester, **survey** the text by *skimming* the *front matter*, *chapter elements*, and *back matter*. This process is like looking at a map before taking a trip; taking a few minutes to study the planned route may save you time and trouble while you travel through the material in search of the author's perspective and theme of the text.

SQ3R

**Questioning**

A good way to learn new material is to link it to information that you already know. After **surveying** the chapter, your first step is to ask yourself: “What do I already know about the topic?” Summarize your existing knowledge on the subject *in writing* in preparation for applying your base knowledge to the new material

Your next step is to write a list of questions for yourself. These questions should be linked to the chapter headings or sections. There is no “correct” set of questions. Your goal is to begin thinking critically about the material.

Reading

Now that you’ve **surveyed** the text and created your **questions**, **read** the text one section at a time. Since you will read the text more than once, do not mark the text during your first read—just read. Try to answer the **questions** that you asked yourself during the questioning stage. Identify the learning objectives you reviewed during your **survey**. If no objectives are provided, then try to identify the main idea of the text.

Reading again...

After you have heard the professor’s lecture on the chapter, go back and read through it again with your pen/pencil and highlighter.

- Write notes in the margins.
- Mark unfamiliar terms and define them.
- Circle, underline, or highlight key terms and concepts.
- Avoid *over*-marking—if everything is highlighted, then nothing will stand out.



SQ34

Reviewing

Reviewing after you **read** and **recite** is the last step in the SQ3R process. It is not a *final* step because the **review** stage is ongoing. Students who read the material for the first time right before the test often do poorly.

By **reviewing** the material periodically in the days and weeks after **reading**, you will internalize the information. **Reviewing** will also help you to identify knowledge gaps—areas you need to **read** and **recite** again. *Scan* your text and notes to find the “missing” information.

- Reread your notes and then summarize them from memory.
- Review and summarize in the writing the text sections you highlighted. Try to condense the material so that you can focus on key ideas.
- Reread the preface, headings, tables, and summary.
- Quiz yourself using your questions from the Q-stage. You can also do this in a study group using your classmates’ questions.
- Take any review quizzes or tests available at the end of the chapter or online.
- Ask your instructor for help with difficult material.

READING PURPOSE

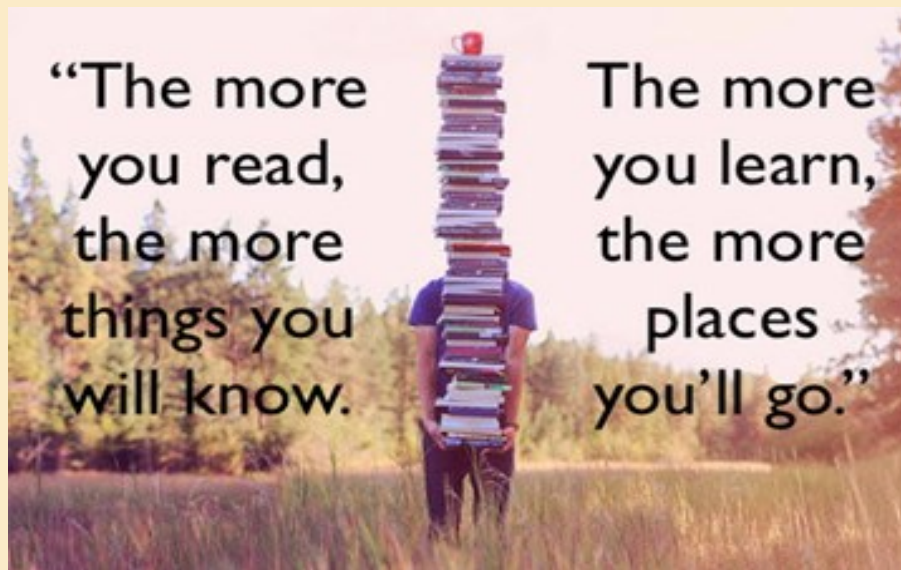
Students often ask if they should read their textbooks in the same manner that they would read a novel or technical manual. The answer is that your purpose for reading a particular resource will determine the reading strategy you will use. You may read a novel or a magazine for enjoyment; however, reading for an academic purpose requires a different approach.

Ask yourself why you are reading the text. One way to do this is by completing this sentence: “In reading this material, I intend to define/learn/answer/achieve...” Write down your goal before you begin and look at it whenever you lose focus or get bogged down in details. With a clear purpose, you can decide how much time and effort to spend on various assignments. This is particularly important in college where you will need to prioritize your assignments and the amount of time you need to spend on each one.

Following are four reading purposes. You may have one or more for any “reading event.”

- Reading for understanding
- Reading to evaluate analytically
- Reading for practical application
- Reading for pleasure





READING STRATEGY

Use your class syllabus to help define your purpose for each assignment. Identify what the professor will expect you to know and do with the material. Depending on what your instructor expects, you may have three reading purposes—understanding, critical evaluation, and practical application. If you are confused about your purpose, email your professor for clarification. She will likely be impressed with your motivation.

The first step is to identify the key concepts in the text by surveying, and ask yourself critical questions related to your purpose. Then read the text in greater detail so you can gain a more in-depth comprehension. This level of reading goes beyond simple recall. Analytical evaluation requires you to look at cause and effect and to compare and contrast. The best way to make sure that you are successfully reading analytically is to become an active reader. Take notes as you read, highlight key sentences, and look for patterns that recur in the text. With the SQ3R technique, applying the information from your text to exams, essays, and presentations will be easier.

When you read for practical application, you are collecting specific information to achieve a specific goal. During this process, you are gathering elements of the text to support your goal. You should take note of details such as relative quotes from characters or the narrator of the text, examples of key moments in the plot, or key information pertaining to your subject matter.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER

BUILDING 39 | ROOM 111

PHONE: 202-274-5938

E-MAIL: asc@udc.edu

WEBSITE: www.aac.edu



The Academic Support Center (ASC) offers an array of services designed to strengthen students' skills and abilities in areas critical to college success. Services include peer tutoring in writing in all content areas, foreign languages (Spanish and French), and help with study skills, oral communications/presentations, and critical reading and thinking. Also, the ASC refers students to specialized tutoring that may be available in other departments.

REFERENCES

Carter, C., & Bishop, J. (2006). *Keys to Success: Building Successful Intelligence for College, Career, and Life* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Cuseo, J., & Fecas, V. (2008). *Thriving in College and Beyond: Research-Based Strategies for Academic Success and Personal Development*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Pub.

Harrington, C., & Daidone, E. (2012). *Student Success in College: Doing What Works!* Cengage Learning.



@aacudc



facebook.com/
aacudc