

How efficient are you at understanding what you read?**Learning from Textbooks**

Textbooks are basic tools in every student's learning. Efficient use of the textbook is therefore a very important study skill. There are ways of improving your reading so that you can understand and learn more.

One of the key points is to become more active and engaged with your textbook. Let's face it, textbooks are rarely exciting in themselves. The following proven method of using textbooks will improve your ability to learn. If you follow the method outlined below your textbook can become the most important tool at your disposal.

The **SQ3R** system is a reading method practiced by many students with good success. Read down through the descriptions and have a go at using this method the next time you use a textbook.

For each item, indicate whether you currently use this method. If you do, mark the box on the left - indicating that this contributes to your study success. If not, mark the box on the right, indicating that this is moving you away from your study goals.

S = SURVEY - The information necessary to focus more sharply on the material.

Spend a few moments browsing through the part of the book you are going to read. Take note of the way the author has organised the information. The headings and the sub-headings give you the best idea of the way the writer has arranged the key points. Be careful to note any diagrams, tables and maps there may be. Note the heading used and what is shown.

The purpose of this survey is to gather the information necessary in order to get focused and to decide what it is you are about to learn. This activity will help you formulate questions relating to the given subject.

Q = QUESTION – Come up with questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? relating to what you are about to read.

One section at a time, turn the main headings into as many questions as you think will be answered in that section. The better the questions, the better your comprehension is likely to be. You may always add further questions as you proceed. When your mind is actively searching for answers to questions it becomes engaged in learning. So you will always be reading with the purpose of finding answers to the questions you have come up with.

R = READ - fill in the information around the questions you have come up with.

You will have accomplished much of the first two steps in only a few moments and so the time you will spend on step 3 will be reduced. Only now do you actually read the words in the section. Read each section with your questions in mind. Look for the answers, and notice if you need to make up some new questions. Note down your questions on paper.

R = RECALL - test how much of what you have just read you can remember.

After reading each section put the book to one side and try to recall the answers to the question you posed. Jot your points down in quick note form (see the note taking skills section). Look back again at the textbook (as often as necessary) and fill in any points you may have missed out on. Don't go on to the next section until you can answer those questions.

R = REVIEW - re-enforce what you have just learned.

When you are coming near to the end of your allocated time for this section of your study session, review all you have read. Go back over all the questions from all the sections in the textbook you covered during this session. See if you can still answer them. If not, look back on your notes and refresh your memory.

What actions can you now take to increase your study success?