

STUDYING HINTS

Studying and reading are not the same thing. There are some key differences between these two activities:

1. **Motives** for doing one or the other
2. **Goals** that are set in each case
3. **Techniques** that are used in each situation

Differing Motives

Reading is usually voluntary, and something we primarily do for enjoyment. We read to answer a question, to solve a problem, to pursue an interest, or for leisure.

Study-reading, on the other hand, is often not voluntary. The pragmatic demands of school or work will require that we achieve intellectual mastery over a particular body of knowledge. Instead of being pulled into the reading act by interest, we may be pushed into it by need. Because of this, our goals for study-reading are often quite different from those we have for general reading.

Differing Goals

While reading, we often settle for a relatively light, general level of understanding. Though naturally, we wouldn't want to read without comprehension, we aren't necessarily concerned here with true mastery of every single fact and detail a piece of reading material has to offer.

In study-reading, however, this changes. The goal of study-reading is learning, in addition to the recalling the information encountered. Instead of understanding the content temporarily, we are aiming for permanent learning. This concept requires different techniques.

Differing Techniques

While reading for leisure, we usually read straight through the content once. When our material (i.e. book, magazine) is completed, we move on with a feeling of finality as we move to other activities.

In study-reading, reading through a piece of material is only the beginning of the process. The actual reading part of this process is important, but so are the things we must do before and after this piece. Simple understanding will naturally occur during the reading process, but learning doesn't come as easily.

In response to this, various reading authorities have devised certain strategies and overall study formulas to help us polish our study-skills and make our study-reading as efficient as possible. One of these systems the SQ3R study-system, devised by Francis P. Robinson (Robinson, 1961).

The SQ3R Study Plan

SQ3R stands for the five steps Professor Robinson suggests as essential for successful, efficient mastery of a specified body of instructional material. This system was invented primarily for textbook material, but its major features can usually be adapted to good advantage for any study-reading task. The five steps are defined below:

- **Survey**. This first step is based upon the idea that we learn a total body of information best and most easily if we first approach it at the overall, general level. Robinson suggests a faster and simpler way of achieving about the same thing. In this step, the reader skims rapidly through the entire selection, noting organizational patterns, key ideas, style and general focus. Surveying is not necessarily reading, but the gathering of information.
 - Read the title of the chapter. How does it fit into the overall focus of the lesson, and how does it fit into the organization of the entire book?
 - Go through the table of contents and determine which ideas precede and follow the topic of focus.
 - Lead through the content, noting the major and minor headings and subheadings. These will help you identify the plan that the author had in mind, as they wrote the material.
 - As you make your way through the content, also make note of any pictures, charts or graphs. These are generally included to solidify key points.
 - Make sure to read any summary sections.
 - When completed, take a moment to mentally review what you've surveyed.
- **Question**. The second step of the system is based on the idea that we read best when we're reading to achieve a particular purpose or to answer a specific question. To complete this step, it can be effective to convert subject headings/specified topics into questions.
 - Move back to the beginning of the material and pose a question to read during the first major section. The easiest way to do this is by turning the first major heading into a question.
 - If a header reads "HIM Functions and Services," you can convert this to "What functions and services are included in HIM?"
- **Read**. This step comes after surveying the content and determining which questions must be answered. When questions have been identified, the task of pursuing the answer becomes interesting. Instead of just reading the material, one will be seeking out a particular set of facts/content. A direction has been defined, and a measure of success delineated. This makes the reading purposeful, rather than casual.
 - Read an identified section (from beginning to end), and answering your question(s).
 - This is a searching and problem solving activity, and will be slower than the survey step.
- **Recite**. To determine whether or not the answer to a particular question has been found, the test of recitation or recall must be made. Can the reader now answer the question, or can they not? If they can, they're ready to move on; if not, they should re-read and try again.
 - Immediately after you've finished reading the section, look away from the material and answer your question(s).
 - Immediate recall is one of the strongest learning and retention aids you can use, but it demands conscious paraphrase (using oral or silent verbalization).
 - Without this step, this the SQ3R technique lose 90% of its impact.
 - Complete steps 1-4, for each individual section included within the material required of the assigned lesson.

- Review. Finally, after the reader has moved through the entire lesson using the first four steps of this technique, it is time to put the pieces together. The review step allows you to regain what the initial survey achieved (an integrated, overall understanding of the body of information being studied). It is helpful to glance back through the selection, review notes, re-answer identified questions, while tying it all together.
 - This step is similar to the first step, but now you are reviewing what you have learned.
 - You may save most of the outlining, note-taking and underling for this point.
 - At this point, students should know what parts of the material should be included in an outline and which ones should not.
 - By using this technique, students should end up with more concise and effective notes.

Adapting the SQ3R Method to Various Materials

The SQ3R system was designed primarily for textbook study. Once mastered with textbooks, it can also be adapted to overall principles and learning situations. The point of this method is for students to grasp and understanding of the big picture first, followed by: defining questions, seeking answers, reciting and recalling what was reviewed, and then putting everything together.

Reference:

Robinson, F.P. (1961). Effective study. New York: Harper and Row.