

How to Be an Active Reader

One misconception commonly held by students is that reading is a passive activity. Unfortunately, passing your eyes over words on a page does not automatically store the material in your brain. You have to work for it – coax the information into your memory by asking questions and taking notes. These strategies fall into one general method called active reading. In short, it means that you do something while you read to help yourself remember. The more you involve your senses while you read, the more active you are and the more information you will retain.

Highlight

There are many ways to read actively. The simplest way is to highlight or underline important information as you read. Highlighting should only be reserved for parts of the text that should be reviewed in the future and not information that is already known. You want to be able to refer to the text later and highlighting is your best tool for this.

Write As You Read

Another common method of active reading is to take notes while reading, ideally in a notebook designated for reading notes only. Some students shy away from this strategy, thinking it is too time intensive; however, time is saved in the end because the material only has to be read once if read correctly the first time. If you write while the material is fresh in your mind, you have a helpful written record to review for tests and writing assignments. Be sure to write down page numbers with your notes to help you quickly locate key bits of information.

Don't Get Bugged Down!

If you find yourself getting bogged down on text that is difficult to comprehend, write down the nature of the problem and move on. You can come back to it later if you have time. This strategy is particularly crucial to employ when taking timed tests such as the SAT or ACT where losing just one minute can be costly.

Keep Track of Details

Many successful students employ a hybrid of techniques that include highlighting, note-taking in a separate binder, and summarizing after pauses in the text. To ensure your success, you must develop a system that lets you quickly locate certain types of details. Writing key words in the margin of the page is one strategy. If studying from a library book, use Post-It notes to record details.

In summary, to read more effectively, identify what you want to learn from the material and use active reading strategies to help you. It takes practice to develop your reading skills. The more you use these strategies, the more successful you will become.

How to Successfully Study

It does not matter whether you are writing an English literature paper, reviewing algebra problems, or finishing up a chemistry lab report. There are a few key elements every successful student needs to include in a study plan.

- *Time-Management* – It is not the amount of time you spend studying that matters. It's what you can accomplish during that time. Spending 40 hours to prepare for an exam and only earning a C clearly was a waste of your time. Develop a study plan and learn how to manage your time effectively to maximize your results.
- *Motivation* – If you are not motivated and have a poor attitude, your study session will not be very productive. You have just one opportunity to pass that Geometry exam or ace the term paper. Pick a time of day where you can get motivated to prepare for tests, write essays, and solve problems.
- *Concentration* – The ability to concentrate is one of the more important study skills you need to develop. You won't always be able to study in absolute silence or be able to spend as much time as you would like on a particular project. Learn how to overcome distractions so you can focus all your attention on your studies.
- *When in doubt, ask* – If you aren't sure about a particular topic, don't be shy. Ask your instructor, family, or friends for help. It is important to address the problem area as soon as possible. Otherwise, you will end up having to spend even more time studying to catch up.

SQ3R reading method

SQ3R is a reading strategy formed from its letters:

Survey! Question! Read! Recite! Review!

SQ3R will help you build a framework to understand your reading assignment.

Before you read, Survey the chapter:

- the title, headings, and subheadings
- captions under pictures, charts, graphs or maps
- review questions or teacher-made study guides
- introductory and concluding paragraphs
- summary

Question while you are surveying:

- Turn the title, headings, and/or subheadings into questions
- Read questions at the end of the chapters or after each subheading
- Ask yourself,
"What did my instructor say about this chapter or subject when it was assigned?"
- Ask yourself,
"What do I already know about this subject?"
Note: If it is helpful to you, write out these questions for consideration.
This variation is called SQW3R

When you begin to Read:

- Look for answers to the questions you first raised
- Answer questions at the beginning or end of chapters or study guides

- Reread captions under pictures, graphs, etc.
- Note all the underlined, italicized, bold printed words or phrases
- Study graphic aids
- Reduce your speed for difficult passages
- Stop and reread parts which are not clear
- Read only a section at a time and recite after each section

Recite after you've read a section:

- Orally ask yourself questions about what you have just read, or summarize, in your own words, what you read
- Take notes from the text but write the information in your own words
- Underline or highlight important points you've just read
- Reciting:
The more senses you use the more likely you are to remember what you read Triple strength learning: Seeing, saying, hearing
Quadruple strength learning: Seeing , saying , hearing, writing!!!

Review: an ongoing process

Day One

- After you have read and recited the entire chapter, write questions in the margins for those points you have highlighted or underlined.
- If you took notes while reciting, write questions for the notes you have taken in the left hand margins of your notebook.
- Complete the form for a *critical reading review*

Day Two

- Page through the text and/or your notebook to re-acquaint yourself with the important points.
- Cover the right hand column of your text/note-book and orally ask yourself the questions in the left hand margins.
- Orally recite or write the answers from memory.
- Develop mnemonic devices for material which need to be memorized. Make flash cards for those questions which give you difficulty.