



## SQR4: A classic method for studying texts

SQR4 stands for Survey, Question, Read, Respond, Record, and Review.

It helps you:

- warm up your brain for active, in-depth reading
- identify important facts and concepts
- understand how the information is related
- retain the information in your memory

### S = SURVEY

Before you crack open your book to page one and dive in, take a few minutes to **read the preface and introduction** to the text, and **browse through the table of contents and the index**. This will tell you the main topics that the book will cover, the author's particular approach to the subject (*i.e.*, why he/she wrote another text on the subject when there are probably twenty on the market), and what the basic organizational structure will be.

Repeat the same process at the beginning of each chapter. Read all the titles and subtitles, study any pictures, charts or graphs, read the summary at the beginning or end of the chapter, and look at any review questions the chapter may include. Surveying a chapter in this way gives you the “big picture”, a framework which will help to hold the details together later.

### Q = QUESTION

Before beginning to read, **take the subtitle of the section** (or the first sentence of a paragraph) **and turn it into a question**. For example, if you're reading part of a chapter called “Functions of the Spinal Cord”, ask yourself, “What are the functions of the spinal cord?” This will allow you to actively read, so you can find the answer to the question, versus passively reading the text and missing important information.

### R #1 = READ

Now it's time to read. Rather than passively sliding your eyes over the words, you are now prepared to **actively engage in the text, trying to find the answer to your question**. Be cautious, however, that you don't end up skimming for the answer to your question and missing other important information.





## R #2 = RESPOND

Once you've read the section, **close the textbook and answer your question**, either orally or on paper, **in your own words**. If you can't answer the question, you should reread the section until you can. If, after several tries, you still can't answer your question, go on to the next section and see if things become clearer. You may find that you need to change your question. For example, you may have first posed the question: "What is the Treaty of Versailles?" for the subtitle "The Treaty of Versailles", but after reading the section, you may find that a better question is "Why was the Treaty of Versailles created?" If changing your question doesn't help clarify the reading, it's time to get some help. Your instructor, TA, or Studying for Success Coaches can also help with effective reading strategies.

## R #3 = RECORD

Once you've understood the material and can summarize it in your own words, the next step is to record the information in some way. You may choose to highlight or mark the text or take notes, or a combination of both. Whichever method or combination of methods you choose, **it's critical to remember to read and understand the material *first*, and then go back and record.**

## R #4 = REVIEW

In courses where there is a lot of factual material to remember, a regular weekly review can be a very effective strategy for retaining information. Integrating a weekly review into your study routine will help you remember more of the information longer, thereby changing how you go about studying at exam time. Rather than relearning material that you have forgotten (because you haven't looked at it since reading it or writing it down), preparing for an exam becomes a review of familiar material and can include strategies like trying old exams.

The secret to making regular review periods effective is to **start from the beginning of the course in each review session**. The volume of material to review increases as the semester progresses, but the amount of time needed to review older material decreases. After you've reviewed the first week's material a few times, it will take only minutes to skim over it and recall the key points.

*\* Adapted from materials courtesy of the Guelph University Learning Commons*

