SQ3R
An active reading strategy for textbooks

So much of learning from a text has to do with what we do BEFORE and AFTER we read. Spending time preparing your mind to remember well before you actively tackle a text and spending time reviewing this information after you read to lock it away in your memory will help make the reading you do much more effective. The goal of SQ3R is to essentially "prime the pump" of your memory, helping you to study as you read. It may seem more time consuming first, but students report that this strategy actually significantly increases the speed at which they are able to read, as well as cuts down on time spent re-reading and reviewing later. Learn it well the first time!

**Survey**

Skim the textbook quickly before you read.

Before you begin reading the text straight through, flip through the chapter and read the introduction, the headings, bolded or italicized words, diagrams, and end-matter.

These should give you an idea about:

1. What the main ideas in the reading are (i.e. what you should know when you’ve finished reading)
2. Why they are important.

**Question**

Read with a question in mind.

Are there questions at the end of the chapter? Has your professor given you review questions or asked you to complete a writing assignment on what you’ve read? If so, use that! If not, write one or two of your own.

**Read**

Read with a pencil in your hand.

Read and annotate to keep your mind engaged!

- Mark passages that answer the question or questions described above. Underline evidence that will help you answer the question, like new terms, important people, and key theories.
- Write new questions you have in the margins (things you want to ask your professor in office hours, discussion questions you want to raise in class, etc.) and/or indicate confusing passages to follow up with later. Try to clarify these questions as you read.

**Recall**

Can you answer the question(s) you started with?

Now that you’ve actually read the text, go back and take notes—but only on the most important information. Read through the questions you started with and try to answer them; take notes on the key passages that relate to that question so you have that information to study later. If there is a particular question that is still difficult to answer, go back and read that part of the text more carefully, and consider talking with your professor about it in office hours.

**Review**

An ongoing process!

After the lecture, go back and review your notes. Is there anything your professor discussed that was not in the reading that you should add? What questions do you still have? If you spend a little bit of time studying every day for your class as you read, you will have less cramming to do later before your test!