

Remembering what you read

Purpose - Have a specific purpose when you read. This will help you to:

- **ASSOCIATE:** Relate ideas to each other.
- **VISUALISE:** Try to see pictures in your mind as you read.
- **CONCENTRATE:** Have a specific purpose, associating, and visualising will help you to do this.
- **REPEAT:** Keep telling yourself important points and associate details to these points.



Reading for a Purpose

The information within this booklet has been gathered from workshops personal experience, colleagues, students and the internet.

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PSQ5R

PSQR is a formula that stands for the basic steps in learning from reading in an efficient manner. The **P** stands for **Purpose**, the **S** for **Survey**, the **Q** for **Question** and the 5 **Rs** for **Read** selectively, **Recite**, **Reduce**-record, **Reflect**, and **Review**.

Purpose

Why are you reading this article or chapter, and what do you want to get out of it?

When you have accomplished your purpose, stop reading. For instance, your purpose in seeking a number in the telephone book is specific and clear, and once you find the number, you stop "reading." Such "reading" is very rapid indeed, perhaps 100,000 words a minute! Perhaps it should be called by its proper name, "scanning", but when it suits your purpose, it is fast and efficient. This principle, of first establishing your purpose, whether to get the focus or theme, main ideas, main facts or figures, evidence, arguments and examples, relations or methods, which prompt you to use a reading method that gets what you want in the minimum time.

Survey-Skim

Read the title, author, introduction, table of contents, and skim through sections of the book noting illustrations, size of print, chapter, glossary, appendix, and other sources of quick information. Skim the index for unknown terms.

Glance over the main features of the piece, that is, the title, the headings, the lead and summary paragraphs, to get an overview of the piece, to find out what ideas, problems and questions are being discussed. In doing this you should find the focus of the piece, i.e. the central theme or subject, what it is all about; and perhaps the perspective, that is, the approach or manner in which the author treats the theme.

This survey should be carried out in no more than a minute or two.

Question

Compose questions that you aim to answer:

- What do I already know about this topic? - in other words, activate prior knowledge.
- Turn the first heading into a question, to which you will be seeking the answer when you read. For example: "What were 'the effects of the Hundred Years' War'?" - and you might add "on democracy, or on the economy?" or "What is 'the impact of unions on wages'?"

Read Selectively

Read to find the answers to your question. By reading the first sentence of each paragraph you may well get the answers. Sometimes the text will "list" the answers by saying "The first point.... secondly...." and so on. In some cases you may have to read each paragraph carefully just to understand the next one, and to find the focus or main idea buried in it. In general, look for the ideas, information, evidence, etc., that will meet your purpose.

Recite

Without looking at the book, recite the answers to the question, using your own words as much as possible, use 'cue' phrases and words. These should be brief. If you cannot do it reasonably well, look over the section again.

Reduce-Record

Make a brief outline of the question and your answers. The answers should be in key words or phrases, not long sentences.

Reflect

Recent work in cognitive psychology indicates that comprehension and retention are increased when you "elaborate" new information. This is to reflect on it, to turn it this way and that, to compare and make categories, to relate one part with another, to connect it with your other knowledge and personal experience, in general to organise and reorganise it. This may be done in your mind's eye, and sometimes on paper. Sometimes you will at this point elaborate the outline of step 6, and perhaps reorganise it into a standard outline, a hierarchy, a table, a flow diagram, a map, or even a "doodle." Then you go through the same process, steps 3 to 7, with the next section, and so on.

Review

Survey your "reduced" notes of the paper or chapter to see them as a whole. This may suggest some kind of overall organisation that pulls it all together. Then recite, using the questions or other cues as starters or stimuli for recall. This latter kind of recitation can be carried out in a few minutes, and should be done every week or two with important material.