# Effective Reading with SQ4R—English Transcript

How many times have you read a page of your textbook and couldn't remember a single thing about it? That happens when we're not engaged in reading. Fortunately, there are different ways you can read effectively in order to understand and retain the text.

This tutorial will introduce a method called SQ4R, which you may apply when reading books or reading articles from magazines, newspapers, journals, and even websites. It was developed and later expanded upon by professors Robinson, Forsyth, and Wibberley. SQ4R-- what does that mean? It's an acronym for six steps to effectively read and understand text.

Survey the chapter or article. Write questions for each heading. Read the information one section at a time. Record important information by taking notes. Recite your notes out loud. And review your questions and try to answer them.

Let's take a closer look at each of these steps. Before you begin, be sure to minimize distractions so you can focus on reading and remembering.

The first step in SQ4R is survey, and it's intended for you to determine how the information is organized and what you need to learn. Take about a minute to read the introduction, headings and any subheadings, and the summary or conclusion.

Check out graphs, charts, and images, and skim their descriptive captions. This will help you visualize and make sense of the text when you read it through later. Now you should have a general idea of how the chapter, or article in this case, is organized, and what the main ideas are.

The second step is to turn each heading and subheading into a question. Use some of these question words to get started-- which, when, what, why, where, how, and who. Write down your questions to refer to as you read the text.

One of the headings in the article about deforestation is "Deforestation and Biodiversity." After reading the heading, you might have these questions-- What is biodiversity? How does deforestation affect biodiversity? Why does it matter? From the heading "Causes of Deforestation," you might wonder, "What are the causes of deforestation?"

Also, ask yourself what you already know about those topics. Even if you don't know much, this helps your brain associate the new information with the old information, and it becomes easier to remember. For example, you may already know that people are contributing to deforestation in the jungles of Central America, and you may wonder why they're cutting down the trees. Now you know what to watch for and focus on as you read.

For the third step, read the text carefully looking for major points, ideas, and answers to the questions you wrote down. Read one section at a time, reminding yourself of your questions.

For example, when reading this section, you'll notice that forest fires is one answer to your question, "What are the causes of deforestation?"

Studies show that taking notes while you read helps you remember the content better. That's why Record is the next step in the SQ4R method. As you read, write down or record definitions, details, facts, and explanations of concepts mentioned. Be as brief as possible. Use single words or short phrases in place of sentences when it makes sense.

Going back to the paragraph about forest fires, you might take these notes:

Forest fires = 1 cause

Wildfire vs. controlled burn vs. vandalism

Find out more about controlled burns

If there is something that does not make sense to you, add a new question to your list.

When you finish each section of the text, recite your notes by reading them out loud. Reciting your notes will make connections in your brain between what you already know and what you're reading. This helps you retain the information for use later.

After you finish a few sections of the chapter or article, look at your questions and try to answer them. Can you? Explain the answers to yourself out loud. This will reinforce the connections you made in the Recite step. Then, consult your notes or even go back and reread certain sections until you are confident that you know the information.

For example, check your understanding by listing the causes of deforestation out loud-- cattle ranching, forest fires, population growth-- oh, yeah-- and farming. If you're still unsure or confused about what you read, you may need to ask your teacher or consult another source to get your questions answered.

Applying these six steps when reading may feel odd or seem to take too much time. Keep at it and the SQ4R method will become second nature. Active reading does take more time, but the benefit is that you'll learn more and remember it longer.

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