
Being an Effective Reader (Reading Strategies)

Outline:

Introduction

- Definition of a Strategy
- Reading Strategies
 - SQ3R
 - SQRW
 - REDW

Conclusion

Introduction

Reading is the active process of understanding print and graphic texts; it is a thinking process. Effective readers know that when they read, what they read is supposed to make sense. They monitor their understanding, and when they lose the meaning of what they are reading, they often unconsciously select and use a reading strategy that will help them reconnect with the meaning of the text. Reading strategies can be taught explicitly while students are learning subject-specific content through authentic reading tasks. Effective readers use strategies to understand what they read before, during, and after reading.

1. Definition of a Strategy

In fact, this term has various definitions. Here are some of them:

- ☐ In a broad sense, a strategy refers to an established, habitual, logical or prescribed practice or systematic process of achieving certain ends in an ordered sequence of steps.
- ☐ In education, it means a systematic plan, consciously adapted and monitored, to improve one's performance in learning.

The use of a strategy is a deliberate, conscious, meta-cognitive act. However, when the strategy becomes effortless and automatic, it becomes a skill.

2. Reading Strategies:

As students progress through university, they are asked to read increasingly complex informational and graphical texts in their courses. The ability to understand and use the information in these texts is key to a student's success in learning. Successful students have a repertoire of strategies to draw upon and know how to use them in different contexts. Below is an explanation of three major reading strategies: SQ3R, SQRW, and REDW.

2.1 SQ3R:

SQ3R is a popular reading/study formula designed to help process and increase the retention of written information and strengthen students' reading muscles. One of its greatest benefits is that it helps students

understand more of what they are reading, especially if they are reading material for the first time. This strategy is very useful when **reading textbooks or chapters of books**. It is named for its five steps: survey, question, read, recite, and review.

❑ Survey :

Before you start reading, glance through (or survey) the passage to identify the subject matter, the point of view, and the overall purpose of the passage. In very few minutes, try to:

- Survey the chapter title, headings and subheadings, and captions under pictures, charts, graphs or maps, diagrams,
- Skim the first sentence of every paragraph, the introductory and concluding paragraphs, chapter objectives, and summary (if available),
- Survey the questions, too! Put marks in the margins of the passage if you see questions that mention “paragraph 3” or “lines 11-18”, for example,
- Circle weird names and big words in the questions to increase the chances that you will remember that the word or idea is important when you come across it in the passage.
- Notice reading aids such as italics, boldface print, underlining, etc.

❑ Question :

While you are surveying, come up with a couple of questions about the passage to get more excited about what you are about to read. Even in less than the time devoted to the first stage, do the following:

- Turn the titles, headings, and subheadings into questions,
- Read the questions at the end of each chapter or after each subheading,
- Ask yourself some questions like: what did the teacher say about this chapter or subject? What do I already know about this topic? What is this passage about? Why does this passage exist? What question is this passage trying to answer?
- Note: you can write down these questions for consideration

❑ Read (R1):

Start reading the passage actively. Use the following tips:

- Read each section with your questions in mind looking for answers.
- Notice underlined, italicized, bold-printed words, phrases or sentences,
- Study graphic aids (graphs, charts, tables, diagrams, drawings, etc.,)
- Reread captions under pictures or photos,
- Underline or highlight keywords and major claims,
- Reduce your reading speed for difficult passages,
- Read aloud some passages for better engagement,
- Stop and reread difficult items several times,
- Read only one section at a time.

Make quick notes in the margins of the passage using these keys:

- Numbers for lists, enumerations and sequences,
- Asterisks for individual main points,
- Vertical lines for the main points of several lines,
- Recall phrases to condense major points and details,
- Abbreviation “def” for definitions,
- Circles or boxes for main concepts, ideas, etc.,
- Parentheses for examples,
- ? or ! to react to what you read (agree, disagree...)

Hint!!

The most important claims and conclusions are usually found in the first and last sentences of a paragraph. On your first read-through, pay more attention to the bones of the passage, and less attention to the evidence that backs up those claims and conclusions. If you understand the structure of the passage first, you will know where to find the supporting evidence you need if and when you are asked about it.

□ Recite (R2):

This is the most important part of effective reading. The second "R" stands for reciting in your own words. After you read each paragraph, say back to yourself what it was about using your own words. Use these tips:

- Ask yourself questions about what you have just read,
- Underline and highlight important words you have just read,
- Take notes from the text and write them in your own words,
- Summarize in your own words what you read for better encoding and retrieval,
- Write a summary sentence for each paragraph,
- Use recall cues in margins,
- Recite the answers loud to yourself.

Hint!

The more senses you use the more you are likely to remember what you read. Triple-strength learning involves seeing, saying, and hearing; quadruple-strength learning involves seeing, saying, hearing, and writing.

□ Review (R3):

It is important to review the material you read to understand and remember it. Once you reach the end of the passage, tell yourself what the whole passage's point is—again, using your own words. The following cues are useful:

- Reread each main heading,
- Review the underlined and highlighted material,
- In the margins, write questions for those notes you have highlighted or underlined,
- Go back over the questions you created for every heading. Using your reading notes, see if you can still answer them,

- If not, look back and refresh your memory and then continue,
- Page through your notes to re-acquaint yourself with the main points,
- Ask yourself questions about the notes and answer them orally from memory.

Hint!

Remember that review is an ongoing process. Therefore, you should go through your notes regularly for more effective memory storage and retrieval. Reviewing each time you study will eliminate the need to “cram” for a test.

2.2 SQRW

SQRW is a four-step strategy **for reading and taking notes from chapters in a textbook**. Each letter stands for one step in the strategy. Using SQRW will help you to understand what you read and to prepare a written record of what you learned. The written record will be valuable when you have to participate in a class discussion and again when you study for a test. Read to learn what to do for each step in SQRW.

❑ Survey

Surveying brings to mind what you already know about the topic of a chapter and prepares you for learning more. To survey a chapter, read the title, introduction, headings, and summary or conclusion. Also, examine all visuals such as pictures, tables, maps, and/or graphs and read the caption that goes with each. By surveying a chapter, you will quickly learn what the chapter is about.

❑ Question

You need to have **questions** in your mind as you read. Questions give you a purpose for reading and help you stay focused on the reading assignment. Form questions by changing each chapter heading into a question. Use the words who, what, when, where, why, or how to form questions. For example, for the heading "Uses of Electricity" in a chapter about how science improves lives, you might form the question "What are some uses of electricity?" If a heading is stated as a question, use that question. When a heading contains more than one idea, form a question for each idea. Do not form questions for the Introduction, Summary, or Conclusion.

❑ Read

The information that follows each heading to find the answer to each question you formed. As you do this, you may decide you need to change a question or turn it into several questions to be answered. Stay focused and flexible so you can gather as much information as you need to answer each question.

❑ Write

Record each question and its response in your notebook. Reread each of your written answers to be sure each answer is legible and contains all the important information needed to answer the question. As you practice using SQRW, you will find you learn more and have good study notes to use to prepare for class participation and tests.

Hint!!

Once you complete the Survey step for the entire chapter, complete the Question, Read, and Write steps for the first heading. Then complete the Question, Read, and Write steps for the second heading, and so on for the remaining headings in the chapter.

2.3 REDW

REDW is a good strategy to use to find the main idea in each paragraph of a reading assignment. Using this strategy will help you comprehend the information contained in your assignment. Each of the letters in REDW stands for a step in the strategy.

❑ Read

The entire paragraph to get an idea of what the paragraph is about. You may find it helpful to whisper the words as you read or to form a picture in your mind of what you are reading. Once you have a general idea of what the paragraph is about, go on to the next step.

❑ Examine

Each sentence in the paragraph to identify the important words that tell what the sentence is about. Ignore the words that are not needed to tell what the sentence is about. If you are allowed to, draw a line through the words to be ignored. For each sentence, write on a sheet of paper the words that tell what the sentence is about.

❑ Decide

Reread the words you wrote for each sentence in the paragraph. Decide which sentence contains the words you wrote that best describe the main idea of the paragraph. These words are the main idea of the paragraph. The sentence that contains these words is the topic sentence. The other words you wrote are the supporting details for the main idea.

❑ Write

The main idea for each paragraph in your notebook. This will provide you with a written record of the most important ideas you learned. This written record will be helpful if you have to take a test that covers the reading assignment.

➤ Use **REDW** strategy to help you understand the information in your reading assignments.

Conclusion

The reading strategies explained beforehand are meant to help students engage with the reading materials more effectively and maximise understanding. Mastery of such strategies requires constant practice and rehearsal. Therefore, students need to go through these strategies and try them when they deal with different types of texts, starting from the purpose of reading set by the task they are engaged in.

Time for practice

Task: Identify the reading styles required in the following reading situations: (There is sometimes not a single correct answer, several choices may be possible according to your reading purpose. If you find that there are different possibilities, state the situation in which you would use the various styles.)

1	The TV guide for Friday evening	Scanning
2	An English grammar book	Intensive
3	An article in National Geographic magazine about the Roman Empire	Extensive
4	A good friend's homepage on the Internet	Skimming

5	The opinion page in your local newspaper	Scanning / Skimming
6	The weather report in your local newspaper	Scanning
7	A novel	e.g., extensive reading
8	A poem	Intensive
9	A bus timetable	Scanning
10	A fax at the office	Skimming
11	An advertising email – so called 'spam'	Skimming
12	An email or letter from your best friend	Intensive
13	A recipe	Intensive
14	A short story by your favourite author	Extensive