

# CASE Lecture 3: Reading Strategies

Nick Hillman

[case@lsbm.ac.uk](mailto:case@lsbm.ac.uk)

<http://www.lsbm.ac.uk/case>

## Session Aims

- Challenges of reading for study
- Choosing and evaluating texts to read
- Reading skills and strategies
- SQ3R
- Reading diagrams and tables
- Reading speed

## Challenges of reading for higher level study

- Quantity
- Difficulty
- Purpose: you are reading to introduce yourself to new ideas not just get some information or be entertained
- Unfamiliar words
- Academic style/language
- Maintaining a critical stance
- Poor environment
- Reading speed

# How do you know what to read?

## Reading lists

Be selective in the texts you choose, as well as which sections of those texts that you decide to read: it is usually better to read less in terms of quantity, but more in terms of quality. Train yourself to 'dip into texts' selectively.

## Reference lists/bibliographies of existing readings

## Tutor recommendations

Listen out in lectures and seminars for names of authors and texts that your tutor recommends. Ask your tutor to write the name/title up if you miss it and ask your tutor if there is any particular section of the text you should read.

## Searches

You can use key words from your assignment questions or from topics you are studying to search the library catalogue and journal databases.

# Evaluating if a text is appropriate for you

Initial evaluation:

1. Is the text on your reading list? How did you select that text?
2. Who is the author? Is he/she known in your discipline?
3. What is the title?
4. When and where was the text published?
5. Does the contents page refer to course content/assignment or not?
6. Do the index pages refer to relevant content? If so, how many pages?
7. Does the text extend or build on previous work in the area?
8. How well has the text been reviewed?

By assessing a text with these criteria you will already have begun the process of critical evaluation

## Reading actively

- Underlining/highlighting/notes in the margins
- Questioning what you are reading (at a factual and surface level)
- Questioning critically what you are reading:
  - Does the argument flow logically?
  - What evidence is offered?
  - Are alternative schools of thought considered?
  - Are the conclusions justified?
  - Are the results/findings transferable?

## Reading skills and strategies

- Predicting
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Detailed reading
- Guessing unknown words
- Understanding main ideas
- Inferring
- Understanding text organisation
- Assessing a writer's purpose
- Evaluating a writer's attitude

### Worksheet activity

#### **Detailed reading (SQ3R) for 'manageable chunks'**

Each academic paragraph is often like a mini-essay with a proposition, an argument, evidence, discussion and final point. Read, question, and evaluate a paragraph at a time.

## Skimming a text

This involves reading quickly through a text to get an overall idea of its contents.

Features of the text that can help you include:

- the title, subtitle(s), headings and subheadings
- details about the author
- abstract and introductory paragraph
- first and last sentences of following paragraphs and the concluding paragraph
- notice any pictures, charts, or graphs
- notice any italicized or boldface words or phrases

These will give you the overall idea or gist of the text, i.e. a general as opposed to a detailed understanding.

**Get used to the structure of your texts. Typical structure of a journal article:**

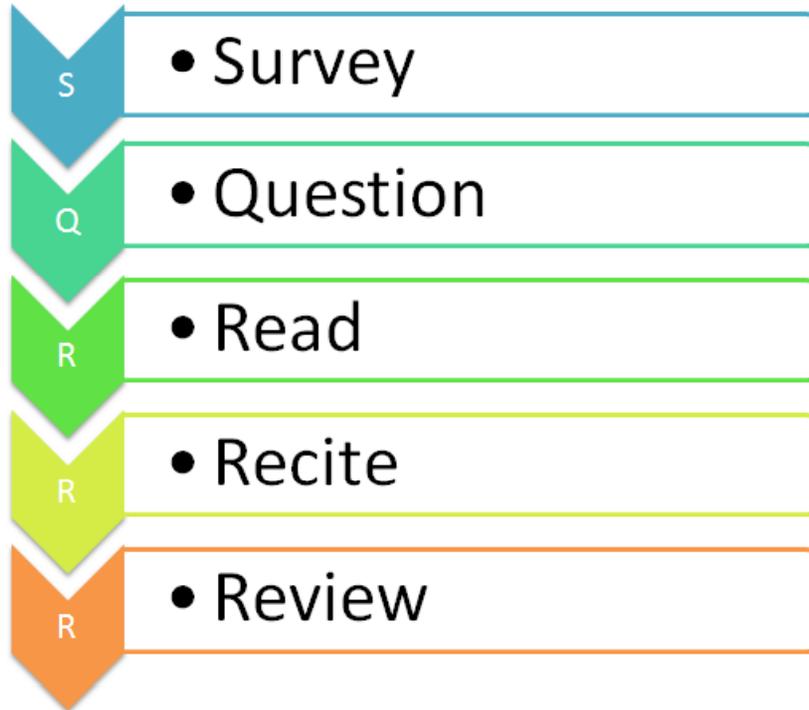
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Method
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion

## Scanning a text

Looking quickly through a text for specific words, phrases or items of information as quickly as possible. In other words, rapid reading for the specific rather than the general, for particular details rather than the overall idea. In scanning, you read a passage only to find that information, ignoring unrelated information.

- Decide what specific information you are looking for
- Try to anticipate how the answer will appear and what clues you might use to help you locate the answer. For example, if you were looking for a certain date, you would quickly read the paragraph looking only for numbers
- Use headings and any other aids that will help you identify which sections might contain the information you are looking for
- Selectively read and skip through relevant sections of the passage

# SQ3R



## [SQ3R Video](#)

## SQ3R

**Survey** = skimming the text

**Question** = the text:

- turn chapter headings and subheadings into questions,
- create other questions around illustrations, graphs
- create questions around any key statements in the introduction, conclusion, or topic sentences that you read when surveying the text

**Read** = use the background work done with 'S' and 'Q' in order to begin reading actively:

- underline, NB, MP (main point)
- use different coloured marker pens,
- use asterisks, question marks, exclamation marks,
- identify key words,
- use numbering to list points

## SQ3R (cont.)

**Recite/recall** = summarise and repeat out loud to yourself what you have just read and take notes, in your own words.

**Review** = check the accuracy of your notes against the text and correct any inaccuracies

Although at first this method will seem laborious and time-consuming, with time you should find that you are reading with increased understanding and this will actually save you time as you will not need to re-read texts.

It is best to apply this method to small chunks of text which you have identified as being key sections for your revision/assignment preparation.

[Video Summary of Reading: University of Wolverhampton On-line Materials](#)

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## Reading diagrams and tables

- Different visual images are used for different purposes. You need to identify the aim and context of the image. Read **around** the image: title, caption, preceding and following paragraphs.
- Check the variables carefully.
- Provide a context for your written version of the image:
  - Who provided the information?
  - When was it collected?
  - For whom is the information intended?
  - What is being measured, and against what?
- Do not try to include all the information in your version; tailor what you write to meet your purpose/argument.

*(Beekman, Dube & Underhill, 2011)*

## Reading speed

There is a wealth of literature on improving your reading speed. It indicates that it is relatively easy to increase reading speed and the benefits are significant.

### [7 Keys to reading faster](#)

## Summary

- Be selective about what you read and how you read: quality over quantity.
- Choose the correct strategy
- Use SQ3R when you need thorough understanding of key sections of texts
- Take notes (include reference details and information re paraphrase and summary)
- Be patient: improvement comes with practice

Reading and note-taking are the backbone of your studies!

## References

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