

INCREASING YOUR READING COMPREHENSION

Food for Thought – Enrichment Event

Active Reading

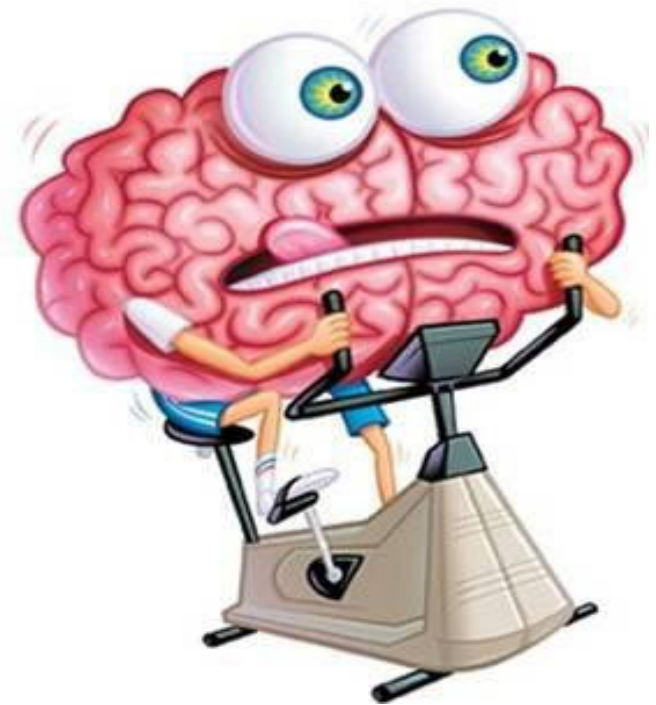
- As a college student, you will spend thousands of hours reading textbooks filled with important information.
- You cannot afford to waste your time by reading on “auto pilot” or by re-reading passages.
- The first step to avoiding “auto pilot” is to develop active reading strategies.

Strategies for Active Reading

1. Have a pen in your hand when you read. Take notes, write questions, or jot down lists of information you need to learn.
2. Use markers to highlight important information in your textbook.
3. Talk out loud as you read to activate your auditory channel and improve both concentration and comprehension

Strategies for Active Reading (cont.)

4. Write summaries or make other kinds of study tools such as visual mappings, hierarchies, flash cards, or comparison charts.
5. Quiz yourself on the material you are studying. Write or recite questions and answers.



Tackling the Textbook

- Let's face it, reading textbooks can be B-O-R-I-N-G!
 - ▣ That is why is so important that you don't waste your time (and sanity) by reading textbooks on "auto pilot"

Begin with a clear intention to understand what you read.

- Approaching a reading assignment with a negative attitude, a dislike for the subject, a fear of the difficulty, poor self-esteem, or a lack of interest in completing the assignment will prevent the information you read from entering your working memory.
- This means that the information will fade away and never be committed to your long-term memory.

Use an organized system for reading textbook chapters.

- Take time to familiarize yourself with the textbook chapter BEFORE you begin reading.
- Skimming or surveying the chapter to get the “big picture” will help you organize the material in your mind.
- *...more on how to survey a chapter in later slides.*

Be inquisitive.

- Create a curiosity about the author's ideas.
- Ask questions about the information.
- Ponder how you might use or apply the information in other ways or to your own life.
- Remember, we learn information more easily if we are able to “attach” it to information we already know!
- Think about why you may already know about the subject.

Manage your textbook time effectively.

- Set aside ample time to get an overview of the chapter, read the chapter, and then mark or highlight the chapter.
- Trying to read a chapter in a short amount of time is a great way to not learn ANYTHING!
- If you cannot designate enough time in one sitting to read an entire chapter, you can space out your reading by covering single sections of the chapter at a time (20 – 30 minutes at a time).

Personalize the information.

- Take your time to visualize the information, create “movies in your mind” or use graphs and charts to make the information more dynamic.
- Personalize the information by applying it to situations you have experienced.
- Develop a feeling or opinion about the topic, this often helps us remember the information.
- Basically, just “get creative” with the reading!

Why survey your reading?

1. It enhances your motivation and your interest in the material.
2. It breaks the inertia or the tendency to procrastinate about starting the reading.
3. It boosts confidence in your ability to master the material.
4. It provides you with a general idea about the length and difficulty level of the material.
5. It helps you set realistic goals and manage your reading and studying time effectively.

How to survey a chapter

- 1. Read the introductory materials carefully.**
 - ▣ What is the title of the chapter? Think about it and try to put it into context of what you already know.
 - ▣ Read any lists, paragraphs, or visual materials that state the objectives for the chapter or introduce the content.
- 2. Read the headings and subheadings.**
 - ▣ Take the time to identify the format or “outline” of the chapter.
 - ▣ You may want to take a moment to write down the headings and subheadings in your notes.

How to survey a chapter (cont.)

3. **Look at visual materials such as charts, graphs or pictures.**
 - ▣ Pictures are often worth a thousand words, take the time to look over visual images and charts.
4. **Read marginal notes.**
 - ▣ These notes may be brief explanations, short definitions, lists of key points or objectives, or study questions that appear in the margins of your textbook.

How to survey a chapter (cont.)

5. **Skim over terminology or information in special print.**
 - ▣ These are the terms that often appear on exams, skimming over them before you read them in context helps you learn them more quickly.
6. **Read the end-of-chapter materials, including any conclusion, summary or chapter review questions.**
 - ▣ These materials highlight and summarize the important concepts that you should know after reading the chapter.

Surveying an Article or Essay

- *Using this surveying technique when reading research sources will save you time and energy later.*
- 1. Think about the title and try to predict what the essay/article will be about.
- 2. Identify the author. Are you familiar with him/her? What do you know about him/her? If you are not familiar, look for a footnote regarding who the author is.
- 3. Carefully read any introductory materials including the abstract (if available).

Surveying an Article or Essay (cont.)

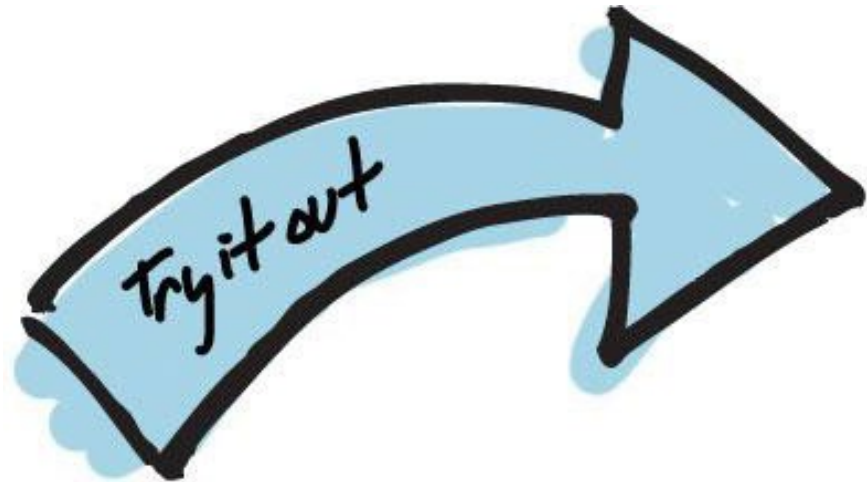
4. Carefully read the entire first paragraph and try to identify the thesis statement and the main points.
5. Skim the rest of the article by reading subheadings and sidebars (margin notes).
6. Read the concluding paragraph – this often restates the thesis and summarizes the main ideas in the article.
 - ▣ If doing research, write down the author's name, the title of the article, and the main points in the article. This step will save you time when you are writing the paper.

Using the SQ4R Reading System

- The SQ4R reading system was originally developed in 1941 and is a 6-step system for reading and comprehending textbooks.
- The strength of this approach is only seen when the reader is careful to cover all six steps on a regular basis.
- It may feel like a lot of work at first but with any new habit, it will become easier and more natural with time.

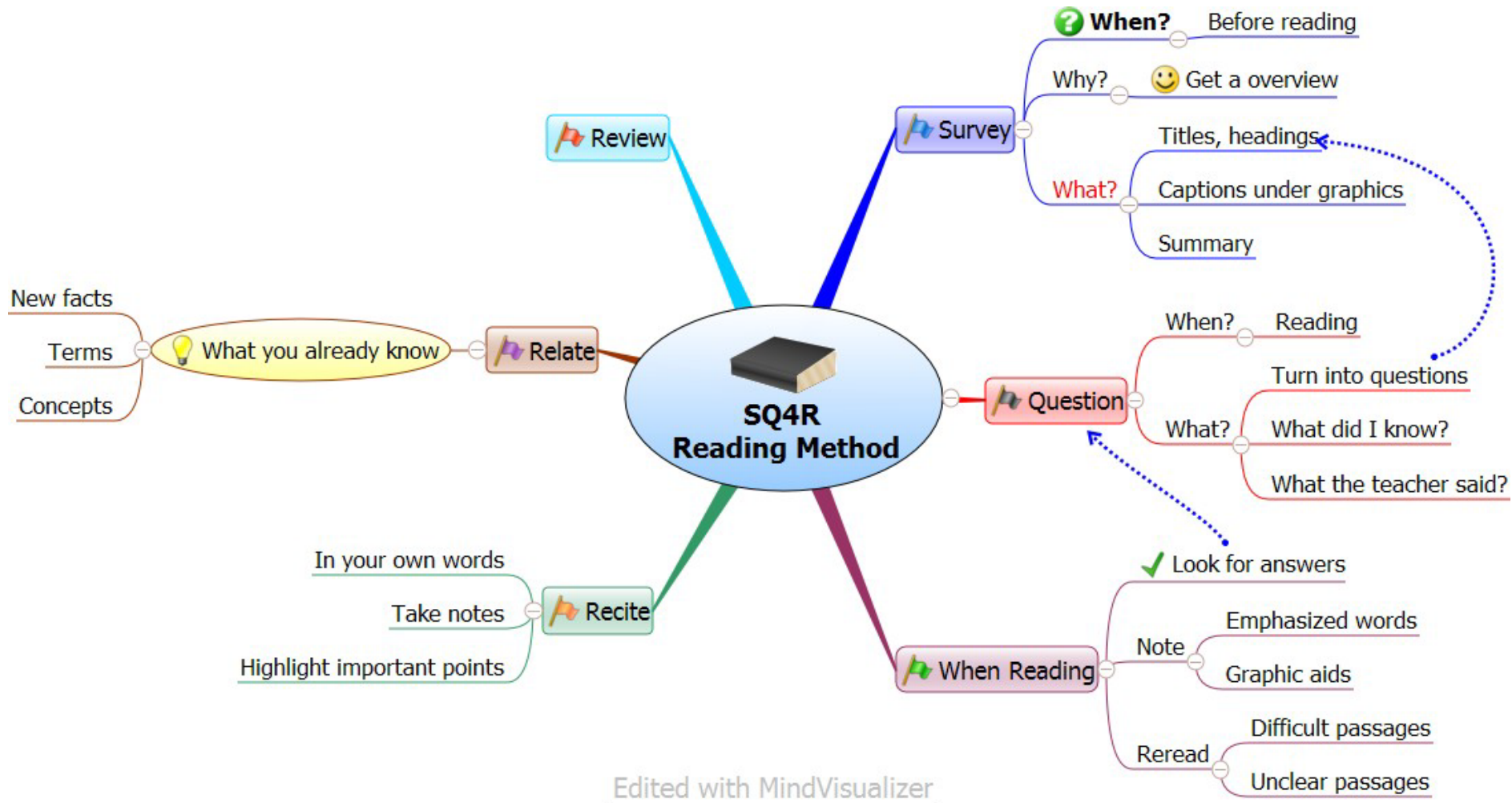
The Steps of the SQ4R System

1. **Survey** the chapter.
2. Write **Questions** for each heading and subheading.
3. **Read** the information, one paragraph at a time.
4. Select a form of notetaking to **Record** information.
5. **Recite** the important information from the paragraph.
6. **Review** the information learned in the chapter.



Take out one of your textbooks and practice the SQ4R system on a chapter (or a section of a chapter).

Are you a visual person? Skip to the next slide to see the SQ4R as a visual chart.



Discussion Question:

Do you feel like it made a difference in your understanding of the material?

More Comprehension Strategies

- **Be patient with yourself and the material.**
 - ▣ If you find yourself reading without comprehending, slow down!
 - ▣ You may need to break down the text into smaller units to allow your working memory ample time to process the new information.
- **Stay with a paragraph until you understand it.**
 - ▣ Confused? Don't move on until you understand.
 - ▣ Try different techniques like visualizing the information.

More Comprehension Strategies (cont.)

- **Recognize different levels of information.**
 - Concepts in textbooks are often organized into different levels of information: there are “big ideas” and “small details”. Look for a way to place what you are reading into this scheme.
- **Learn the terminology.**
 - If you are unfamiliar with the terminology being used in the textbook, understand what you are reading gets harder.
 - If the terms are stumping you, think about making a glossary to terms (in your own words).

More Comprehension Strategies (cont.)

- **Expand your vocabulary.**
 - Beyond the specific terminology in the course, sometimes authors use words that are unfamiliar to us. Don't skip over these words.
 - Underline any words you don't know and look them up in a dictionary, then write a short definition in the margin of your textbook.
- **Become excited about what you learn!**
 - The first step to comprehending the material is fostering a strong desire to learn.



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