HOW TO STUDY A READING ASSIGNMENT: THE PQRST METHOD

(Preview, Question, Read, State, Test)

Why use the PQRST Method?

• To obtain the greatest possible amount of **long-term learning** and **memory** from your study time
• To make better grades on tests

The PQRST Method

There are five steps indicated by five consecutive letters of the alphabet. Use them in order. For each of these five steps notice especially:

  o How the step is accomplished
  o What benefits will result from doing the step well

FIRST: **PREVIEW**  -- Look for the “Big Picture”

Quick familiarization with the material is a prelude to more detailed consideration.

**How to Preview**

• **Read heading** (if given) for each topic or sub-topic. (Cartoons or pictures may serve as topic headings)
• **Read Preview** (if given) for each chapter. If not given, refer to table of contents for listing of topics discussed in each chapter
• **Read first and last sentences, the key sentences of each paragraph** (if topic headings are not given), to get general idea of material in paragraph
• **Read summary** (if given) at end of chapter **first** to get general picture of the chapter
• If none of the above preview aids is available, **scan pages**. Scanning consists of running your eyes rapidly down page to pick up phrases to get an idea of subject matter and general approach to subject.

**Benefits of Previewing**

• Gives you the general picture of material being presented
• Helps you look for and recognize the most important points
• Aids you in seeing the organization of the subject matter
• Forms the “Big Picture” of the material presented
NEXT: **QUESTION** -- Formulate questions you expect to be answered

This will begin to **fix key ideas**, setting the stage for reflecting and relating them.

**How to Question**

- **What should be included** in an article with this title?
- **What questions are suggested** by preview (step #1)?
- **What questions (if any) are listed** at end of a chapter?
  - Read these questions **first**
  - Read questions over after your preview
  - Keep questions in mind during your careful reading of material

**Benefits of Questioning**

- Helps you know exactly what to look for when studying
- Encourages you to watch for details when reading
- Helps you pay closer attention to what you are reading
- Increases your concentration by giving you something to hunt for throughout your study
- Aids you in preparing for exams and in getting better grades
- Enables you to spot more test questions

THEN: **READ** -- Effective reading calls for reaction

You will be able to do this quickly and deliberately now, because you already know where the author is going and what he is trying to prove.

**How to Read Effectively**

- **Think hard** about what you are reading
- **Keep your mind alert**
- **Figure out each point** as you read it
- **Build an over-all pattern** of the material
- **Remember**—reading (learning) is hard work

**Benefits of Effective Reading**

- Prepares your mind to soak up knowledge
- Increases amount that can be learned
- Decreases study time
THEN: **STATE** -- Say over in your own words what you read

It has been proven that most forgetting takes place immediately after initial learning. One minute spent in immediate recall nearly doubles retention of that piece of data.

**How to Become Proficient at Stating**

- **Read a paragraph** then **state in your own words** what author said. Look away from book
- **Look at a topic heading** then **state what was said in your own words**
- **Underline** to help you recall important points
- **Make marginal notes** of key ideas
- **Outline from memory** what you read, **then check accuracy** with book
- **Recall verbally** to tell if you have topic clearly in mind

**Benefits of Stating**

- Gives you a check on what you really learned
- Proves that you have topic clearly in mind if you can put it into words
- Removes doubt about how well you have learned that material
- Increases your confidence

FINALLY: **TEST** – the important last step in your PQRST technique of study

The difference between adequate and excellent preparation is often how well you anticipate the important questions.

**How to Use Testing**

- Think of **testing as shortened run-through** of the “State” step
- Requires **reflective thinking**
- Try to **remember what the instructor said** in class
- **Check** class notes against the text

**Benefits of Testing**

- Prepares you for teachers’ tests
- Improves chances for better grades
- Checks the extent to which you have converted what you have studied into long-term learning
SUMMARY -- Use the PQRST Method to study reading assignments:

- To maximize long-term learning and memory
- To correlate lecture and text material and test your understanding
  To make higher test grades
- To test your understanding of the material
- To help fix the material in your mind
- To establish a framework for reflection
- To make better test grades

Keep in mind that memory does not result from passing the eyes over the material several times. **Memory results from turning the material over in your mind.** In fact, experts agree that **you should spend from half to two-thirds of your study time in reflective thinking.**

The advice of learning expert Dr. Walter Paulk is that to really keep what you’ve studied

- **Relate it** to other knowledge. For example, relate class-notes to text.
- **Find relationships and significance** for what you have read.
- **Review** the material **after leaving it for a while.**
- **Use the “State” and “Test” steps to review** for the next short quiz.
- **Reuse the “State” and “Test” steps for tests throughout the term.**

Several reviews will make that knowledge yours forever. Finally, there is no substitute for time and work in learning.