

Language Arts Series #2 – Taking Notes From A Book

WAIT! DON'T SIT DOWN! You need to grab a basic kids book first. Any author will work, a Dr. Seuss classic, Where The Wild Things Are, so long as it is a multi-page picture book with just a sentence or two per page. After you have a book, you can settle into a comfy spot and begin 😊

Introduction

How would you like to possess a skill that would enable you to read any book just once and know, actually KNOW, the information inside well enough to pass any parental questioning or test? Like 1-2-3 Writing, SQ3R Reading seems so simple, you may have to prove it's validity to disbelieving peers.

SQ3R Overview

Scan, Question, Read, wRite, and Review – for those wondering about SQ3R. The techniques enable you to pick up a book in a bookstore or library, spend five minutes with it and decide if its what you are after or not with confidence. You'll be able to read even a difficult textbook just once and pull out the key information, memorize it if needed, and prepare yourself faster and more thoroughly than other students.

There, I think that covers what you need to tell adults about the method 😊

In teen terms – you'll be able to spend less time, learning and retaining more information, in virtually every subject by the time you complete this.

S – Scan

Step one, Scan, seems pretty straight forward. Look at the cover – does the book look interesting or dull as old toenail collections? Turn it over and look at the back cover. Read a few lines if there is a blurb about the book – if you find yourself wanting to read the whole blurb, keep going. If you find the blurb dull, put the book back. Life is too short for boring books 😊

Open up the book to the title page – that is the page with the title on it, right at the front. On the back of that page you'll find the copyright information. This is when the book was first written and when it has been revised. If you want a book on technological advances and the copyright is from the 1970s, find another book.

Go to the table of contents, also at the front of the book. If it doesn't have one, that's alright. Some authors like to keep readers in the dark. If the book has one, read the chapter titles and see if any sound like what you are interested in.

Flip to the back of the book and see if there is an index and/or glossary. A glossary defines words used and the index helps you find what the author or editors feel are key points in the book. A reading of both of these, prior to tackling any textbook, will better prepare you for the work ahead.

Try It Yourself

Grab the book you selected and go through the Scan process. Most picture books won't have a table of contents, index or glossary so this will go fast.

Q – Question

Let's get hypothetical for a minute. A parental unit has just assigned Chapter 3 in the biggest, heaviest science book this side of creation. The fact that it is just section 3.1 for today does little to help your mood. Slamming the book down on the table, you grudgingly flip to the start of the section and begin reading. You know most of the words are going in one eye and out the other, but you are too annoyed right now to care.

Sound familiar?

Questioning happens before reading. It helps you figure out, while you read, what is and isn't important. With practice, Questioning saves a lot of study time.

To explain how to Question properly, you need to dive right in so it's time to –

Try It Yourself

1. Get a piece of lined paper, a pen, and your book and move to a desk, table or other work surface you like.
2. On the paper, you need to make a vertical line in pen to divide the paper into two parts. Take the edge where the holes are and fold it towards the opposite side, folding the paper in half. Unfold the paper. Use your pen to draw a line along the fold mark, dividing the front of the paper into two halves.

3. Turn to the first page of text and look at the pictures. Ignore the words for now. Form a question about the pictures. Let's say you see two dogs and a flower. Your question could be "Who are the dogs?" or "What's with the flower?" Write down your question on the side with the holes. If you feel like putting more than one per page, go right ahead. Just leave a few lines between each question and keep them all on the left side of the paper.
4. Turn to the next page in your picture book and again come up with a question about the picture. Continue this way until you finish the book.

Question Continued

With more sophisticated books – textbooks for example – the Question step becomes far easier. Publishers like things clearly defined for readability and you can often use the bold type sections and headings to form the majority of your questions. If you did the Scan step correctly, a quick survey of the special drawings, photos and notations compared mentally with the index helps you know what the author felt was important – often the basis for testing.

Learning to do this step well takes time so don't get frustrated if you find yourself adding additional questions while reading initially. With practice, you'll soon learn to Question your reading well enough that the rest becomes simple.

R1 – Read

Try It Yourself

Put aside the piece of paper with your questions for now. With pen in hand, read your picture book. Anytime you come to the answer for one of your questions, underline it or circle it or put a box around it – some visual clue that you will notice later. Don't stop to write the answer down, just mark the spot and keep reading.

This is where, while you are still learning to Question difficult texts, you'll find additional questions you should have written on your paper. Again, don't put them on the paper. Just mark them as Questions in the book in some way that you'll know means they aren't answers.

The important part is to just keep reading until you've gotten all the way through.

R2 – wRite Your Answers

Try It Yourself

Now you want that piece of paper. Look at your first Question. Find where you noted the answer when you Read the book. Re-read just the Answer and then write it down on your paper. Write it on the right side – the non-hole side – using the same lines as the Question.

This step should go very quickly, even if you have noted additional Questions to add to your paper. When you are done, your paper will have a list of Questions on the left side and a list of Answers on the right.

R3 – Review

At this point, how you use the information on the paper differs depending upon your ultimate goal. The one you've created from a picture book, you'll most likely toss in the trash.

If you are trying to memorize the information for a test, you can use your notes to easily Review just the important information. A sibling can quiz you by asking the Questions and verifying your Answers.

If you are writing a research paper, you'll want to move your notes to cards most likely. Moving the information will be covered in full detail in the third article of this series. For now, Review your Answers and write down the page numbers next to each one. At the top of the sheet, put the book's bibliographical information – title, author, copyright and publisher.

Summary

Eyes tired? Brain fried? Thankfully, you're done 😊