



What is it and why do I care?

The PQRST Method is a way of engaging with your reading so the information you read is retained in your long-term memory. It's a five-step process designed to help you really learn what you're reading so you can expand and build on it.

The Steps

Previewing

Familiarize yourself with what you'll be reading. Look at the textbook, syllabus, or course syllabus; note the main topics and how the content is divided. See how ideas have been mapped out, and what concepts have more sub-topics devoted to them. Read the summaries first (they may be at the beginning or end of a chapter) to get a sense of what you'll be studying before you read in-depth about it. Headings, highlighted keywords, pictures, maps, or diagrams will also provide big-picture clues to content.

Questioning

Turn subject headings or subheadings into questions to be answered once you're done reading. Write down any questions that popped into your mind when you were previewing the material. If there are study questions, add them to your list. You can even make some declarative sentences about the topic, e.g. "I think..." – these ideas may be supported or proven wrong by your in-depth reading. Set your list of questions and/or statements aside to use later.

Reading

Don't rush your reading. Make a deliberate choice to read for understanding not just to knock an item off your to-do list. After reading a particularly tricky section stop and try to explain it to yourself. Read it again if necessary. Highlight key terms or concepts so you can find that section again if you discover later that your understanding was incomplete or inaccurate. Try to relate what you're reading to something you already know – maybe a direct connection to another topic you're studying or to an unrelated topic that helps you make sense of the new information. Finally, think about the questions and statements you created in the last step and read with the intent of answering those questions.

Summarizing

Write notes on what you're reading. Handwritten notes are best, but typed notes will do. Check out our worksheets on [Cornell Notes](#), [Concept Mapping](#), and [Mind Mapping](#) for some notetaking options. Don't write down passages verbatim. Instead, summarize the key points and maybe include references to how what you read relates to other things. Note page numbers for sections you found particularly tricky or for diagrams you found helpful. Once you've completed your notes for a section or chapter, recite them back to yourself. Consider how you might present them to a group or tutor someone else on the content.

Testing

Finally, test yourself on what you read by answering the list of questions and either confirming or debunking statements you made. Revisit the associated text for any questions you missed. If you think of a question you should have asked, add it to the list. Plan to try answering these questions again tomorrow and again a few days after that. This is called spaced repetition and will help solidify what you learned.

Video Resources

<https://youtu.be/BFHLsD930zc>