



READING: THE PQIRST METHOD

1. PREVIEW

Look for the best overall picture of what you are about to read. This tells you what the chapter, section, or book is about, and what particular issues within that topic will be discussed. Previewing helps you determine the purpose of the reading, and how quickly or slowly you should read.



To preview a book:

- Read the preface or introduction, to note the author's purpose in writing.
- Look at the table of contents.
- Page through the book, glancing at the chapter headings and subheadings, and at occasional sentences. Also note the terms in italics or boldface, pictures, graphs, and chapter summaries.



To preview a chapter or article:

- Read the headings or section titles, to see the main topics and their organization.
- Note the subheadings and subtopic under each heading.
- Pay attention to the order of the topics and subtopics.
- Skim over the first and last sentences under each topic.
- Skim over the chapter summary.

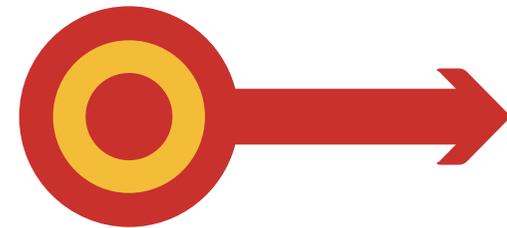
One of the best things about previewing is that it takes very little time. Once you've had some practice, you'll usually be able to preview a chapter in 5 minutes or less, and a book in 10 minutes or less. Better yet the previewing ultimately SAVES you time. If you have a general idea about what a reading assignment covers, you will be able to determine how it relates to the course for which you're reading, and what you want to learn from it, making your reading more focused and efficient. If after previewing, you can answer the questions, "What is the chapter or book about?" and "What main points will be discussed?", your preview was successful!

2. QUESTION

With specific questions in mind about a reading assignment, you will know exactly what information to look for – and you'll be motivated to find it! This will help you to learn as much as you can from reading.



- Start by turning the chapter headings and subheadings into questions
- If other parts of the reading raised your curiosity during your Preview, create a question about it.
- Use the study questions in your textbook
- Keep flexible while forming questions. The number you generate will depend on the length of the assignment and the amount of detail you want to learn.
- You may also want to add or change questions as you read, if you notice important points that your original questions did not address.





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3. READ

Your Preview and Questions have prepared you to read carefully and actively.



Use headings, subheadings, special terms, pictures, and summaries as a guide for main ideas. Remember that each paragraph contains a main idea, and supporting ideas. Look for these, and underline, highlight, or note the main ideas in the margins. Read for ideas rather than single words: train your eyes to look at cluster of related words rather than at each individual word. Use your pen as you guide, by highlighting or underlining phrases or clusters of related words. Cluster reading will increase your reading speed, by reducing the number of times your eyes stop, and increase your comprehension, since you are training yourself to look at whole ideas at once. Following these guidelines will ensure that you are answering your questions as you read. After each section ask yourself, "Do I understand this? Am I learning what I wanted to?" This will lead you into the next step.

4. SELF-RECITE

In this step, summarize what you just read in order to check your understanding of the material and help retain it.



- Without looking at the book, recite the main headings and the main idea under each and tell yourself in a sentence or two what you read. Then, scan over the section quickly to pick up any essential points you may have missed.
- It may be helpful to stop and recite after each major section of a chapter, especially if the chapters are long.
- You can recite in your head or aloud, but many students find it most effective if they jot down what they recite. This, of course, also makes it much easier to review later.
- Many students also find Self-Reciting helpful because it requires monitoring their attention carefully, and improving it!

5. TEST

Testing yourself seals the material into your long-term memory – and every time you test yourself, you ensure that you will keep it there!



- Test yourself within 24 hours of reading the material to avoid forgetting it.
- Start by recalling as much as you can without looking at the book or your recitation notes. If you have difficulty, look at the questions you wrote to jog your memory, but don't look at your answers or other notes until you have given your memory a chance to work.
- Now, look back over your recitation notes to make sure you remembered all the important points and main ideas. If you still think you missed something, look over the reading assignment, too.
- After the initial Test session, do at least one more before you'll be tested on the material. The more you test yourself, the more firmly the information will be planted in your long-term memory.
- Many students find it helpful to test themselves on lecture notes from the class sessions related to a reading assignment at the same time they test themselves on the reading. This helps to clarify and solidify connections.
- The best part of the Test step is that it can be VERY BRIEF. And when it's time to do a major review before an exam, you'll be amazed at how much you already remember between lectures and readings.