

How To Get More Out of What You Read



You don't mind tackling most homework. In fact, you like a challenge. But when faced with a long reading assignment, you just check out.

Of course, it's not that you can't read. It's just that you'd rather not, thank you very much. But every year, you're expected to do more and more reading.

Short of chaining yourself to your desk, what are you going to do? Luckily, you can learn how to get more out of what you read. And you can learn different ways to read different kinds of assignments.

Since reading is going to be with you throughout your school career, you might as well figure out how to get more out of what you read. Here are some tips to help.

Put SQ3R to work for you

This is a method that works well any time you have a reading assignment for subjects like science or history where it's important to remember the key points.

S is for survey

If you're an athlete, you know how important it is to warm up before any serious athletic activity. The same is true for reading—you need to "warm up" before starting a challenging assignment.

Start by skimming over the material. What do you *think* the assignment may be about? The chapter title often provides some clues (a chapter titled "The Battle of Gettysburg," for instance, is probably about ... well, you can figure it out). If there's no chapter heading, or it has one of those clever titles like "Chapter 17," you'll have to do a little more digging. Look at the illustrations. Look for words in **boldface** type.

Once you've done this survey, you'll find you probably already know something about the subject. That will make it easier to read the material, because you'll be seeing how it relates to the things you *do* know.

Q is for question

You'll get a lot more out of your reading if you ask questions as you go along. Here are some questions to keep in mind:

- What's the most important point of this selection?
- How does this relate to what I already know?
- What is most likely to come next?

Asking questions will help keep you focused as you move on to the next step: reading.

The 1st R is for reading

Now's the time to read the material carefully. As you read, see if you can find the answers to the questions you've developed.

The 2nd R is for restating

See if you can restate the three or four main points. Highlight the most important facts to remember. You may want to take some notes. Or create a diagram of the main idea of the reading selection and the most important ideas it contains.

The 3rd R is for reviewing

Once you've finished reading, quiz yourself. Can you answer the questions at the end of the chapter? Can you explain in a minute or two what you've just read? This step can be done right away as well as days later.



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Practice really does make perfect

It's really true that you'll read better and faster if you read more. Reading is a skill. Like shooting a jump shot or playing a video game—you get better with practice.

Try to read for at least 15 or 20 minutes a day. Read something that interests you—the sports pages of the newspaper or a magazine article on your favorite rock star. Read about a hobby or about a place you've always wanted to visit.

Use these tips when you're reading a novel



Start by investing some time

Here's a tip about some of those "classics" you have to read for English class. Many of them were written in an age when people had a lot of time. So they tend to start pretty s-l-o-w-l-y.

If the introduction is boring, confusing, or both, try reading out loud for a while. You will eventually get to the "good part." Honest.

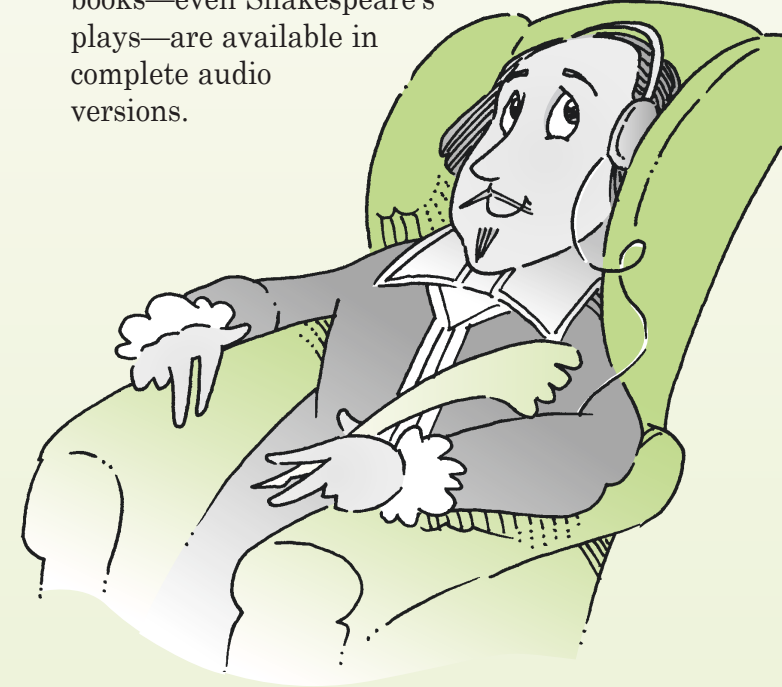
Once you start reading, keep going

Many books use a lot of words that aren't so familiar today. If you stop to look up every word you don't know, you'll never plow through the novel. So jot down words you don't know and then keep on reading. Later, look up the meanings of the words you don't understand.

One good thing you'll discover is that as you read, your vocabulary will improve. So when it's time to take those college-entrance tests or job exams, you'll score better because you've become a regular reader.

See about getting audio books

Especially if you are an *auditory* learner—one who learns best by hearing things—you may prefer audio books. Check with your school or public library. Many novels and nonfiction books—even Shakespeare's plays—are available in complete audio versions.



Reading is a foundation for learning and will always be a part of your life. Make sure you get the most out of what you read.