Use the SQ3R Method for Textbooks

To read a textbook chapter effectively, plan a little in advance and follow through with some review and reinforcement. Plunging right in is the worst approach but also the most common. Almost anything would be better, even starting from the back of the chapter and reading toward the front.

Most recommended approaches include elements of the **SQ3R Method:**

- **Survey:** Get an idea of what is involved before starting out.
- **Question:** Be actively responsive throughout the process.
- **Read:** Read straight through for main ideas without taking notes or stopping.
- **Review:** Go back and mark key ideas. Clear up any confusion.
- **Recite:** Reinforce understanding and memory by telling the main and essential supporting ideas.

**Survey**

Browse through the chapter, getting the feel of it, noting the main headings, examining charts, graphs, and pictures. Skim summaries and questions provided. Decide how much time is needed and how difficult it is. Break the chapter into manageable segments. Set time limits for each segment including time for surveying, reviewing and reinforcing. This part is like planning for a backpacking trip.

**Question**

Be alert and responsive to the writer's ideas, as though you were having a conversation. Question whenever it feels right, but act as though someone wants you to understand something. Be open to it.

**Read**

Read through once quickly without stopping or taking notes. Get a general good idea of the main points in a chapter, usually three to five- and the reasoning. Don't worry about complete mastery yet.
• **Review**

This is the study part. Go back and find the main idea. Highlight or underline it, the key words only. Put some sort of outline notation in the margin (I, II, III, etc.). Mark just enough material to trigger your memory when you review for tests later. Too many or too few notes will just waste your time.

• **Recite**

Before you take a break, be sure to test your understanding by telling someone or writing from memory the key ideas and supporting details of what you have just read and reviewed. Skim back over fuzzy material. Some students write out this part in the bottom margin. Marking and writing in the text gets rid of the need for a separate notebook. An outline of the chapter is right there in the book for easy review. (Now give yourself a reward before going on to the next segment).

*If you skip the recite step, you will forget most of what you have read by the next day and will have to do it all over again.* If you do reinforce it now, brief brush-ups are all that will be needed.