

# Studying in English

A practical approach to study  
skills in English as a second  
language

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# Contents

Foreword viii  
Acknowledgments x

## Unit One Study problems and objectives

A Listening comprehension: *Study problems* 1  
B Note-taking: *Word omissions* 1  
C Reading: *Study objectives* 4  
D Practice section 10

## Unit Two Organising your study

A Listening comprehension: *Concentration and study habits* 12  
B Note-taking: *Abbreviations and numbers* 13  
C Lecture: *Planning a timetable* 14  
D Practice section 15

## Unit Three Note-taking

A Listening comprehension: *General principles of note-taking* 18  
B Note-taking: *Salient points* 19  
C Reading: *Skills involved in note-taking* 19  
D Practice section 26

## Unit Four Improving your reading

A Listening comprehension: *Increasing reading speed* 29  
B Note-taking: *Synonyms, word compression and omission of examples* 30

- C Lecture: *Increasing reading comprehension* 31
- D Practice section 35

## Unit Five Lectures

- A Listening comprehension: *Listening to lectures* 37
- B Note-taking: *Signalling devices (1)* 38
- C Reading: *What can the lecture achieve?* 39
- D Practice section 43

## Unit Six Using a dictionary

- A Listening comprehension: *What kind of dictionary?* 46
- B Note-taking: *Signalling devices (2)* 46
- C Lecture: *What a dictionary contains* 47
- D Practice section 54

## Unit Seven Reading textbooks

- A Listening comprehension: *Skimming* 56
- B Note-taking: *Relationships (1)* 57
- C Reading: *The SQ3R method* 58
- D Practice section 61

## Unit Eight Learning in small groups: Tutorials and seminars

- A Listening comprehension: *Improving your speaking ability* 63
- B Note-taking: *Relationships (2)* 64
- C Lecture: *Tutorials and seminars* 65
- D Practice section 66

## Unit Nine Writing reports and articles

- A Listening comprehension: *Judgement skills in writing* 68
- B Note-taking: *Relationships (3)* 69
- C Reading: *Report writing* 70
- D Practice section 75

## Unit Ten Learning and remembering

- A Listening comprehension: *Memory* 78
- B Note-taking: *Relationships (4)* 79
- C Lecture: *Methods of improving learning procedures* 79
- D Practice section 80

## Unit Eleven Examinations

- A Listening comprehension: *Preparing for the examination* 82
- B Note-taking: *Lectures and books* 82
- C Reading: *Examination and test techniques* 83
- D Practice section 90

## Unit Twelve Reference and research techniques

- A Listening comprehension: *Reference techniques* 95
- B Note-taking: *Sequence of ideas* 96
- C Lecture: *Research techniques* 97
- D Practice section 98

## Bibliography 99

## Unit Seven

### Reading textbooks

#### A Listening comprehension: Skimming

Listen carefully to the talk which you are about to hear. Answer each question below when you are instructed to do so.

##### Skimming

- Complete the following sentences according to what has been said. (Write several words to replace the blanks.)
  - When we read normally our eyes concentrate on \_\_\_\_\_ but when we skim our eyes become aware of \_\_\_\_\_
  - Although the eye movements appear to move in no regular direction, they are influenced by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
- According to what you have just heard, write T if the following statement is true and F if it is false:
 

We should try to maintain the same level of comprehension when we are skimming as when we are reading.
- Complete the following sentence according to what has been said:
 

The application of skimming techniques enables us to find out whether a book will be \_\_\_\_\_
- Complete the following sentences by writing one word to replace each blank:
  - We scan when we want to locate \_\_\_\_\_ information.
  - After finding the information we want, it will probably be necessary for us to read the appropriate section \_\_\_\_\_.
- Give another name for selective reading.
  - When is this technique used?
- According to what you have just heard, write T if the following statement is true and F if it is false:
 

Only those students who can read quickly can learn how to skim successfully.

#### B Note-taking: Relationships (1)

As was demonstrated in the reading text in Unit 3, the ability to recognise basic relationships is essential for successful note-taking. Although sets of relationships are expressed by numerous verbal equivalents, the basis of each set can often be shown by a single visual symbol. An awareness of fundamental relationships between words and ideas is thus one of the most important aims in seeking to attain the required skills of note-taking. Consequently, each section in Units 7–10 will concentrate on giving examples of the various symbols commonly used in notes. (The lists of verbal equivalents given for each sign are far from being exhaustive: in most cases only a limited selection of verbal equivalents is given.)

- = is, equals, is the same as, is like, is synonymous with, consists of, is made up of, is called, represents, is on a par with

There are some reading texts which are packed with information.  
Some texts = full of inf.

Words which denote linkage are called linkers or connectives.  
Words showing linkage = linkers/connectives.  
Signs represent relationships between various words and ideas.  
Signs = reltnships btwn words and ideas.
- ≈ (is) approximately, (is) more or less

The reading speed of many foreign learners of English at university is approximately 150 words per minute.  
Many f-leaners' r speed ≈ 150 wpm.  
or Many f-leaners read at ≈ 150 wpm.
- / not

This symbol is used to reverse the polarity of a relationship:  
eg ≠ means *is not, does not equal, is different from*

Many exercises designed to train the eye are not very useful.  
Many exs for training eye ≠ useful.  
The Italian word 'simpatico' does not mean the same as the English word 'sympathetic'.  
Simpatico (It) ≠ sympathetic (Eng).
- important quite, rather, fairly (important)

important very, considerably (important)

important very, extremely (important)

Underlining is used in notes to show various degrees of importance or emphasis.

The ability to read quickly is very important.  
Able read quickly = imp.  
A timetable is an extremely effective means of helping the student to establish and maintain a routine of study.

Timetable = effective in est study routine.

- 5 ∴ therefore, thus, so, then, consequently;  
with the result that, as a result, so (that)

Reading requires the ability to understand the relationship between words. Consequently, for these reasons, many experts have now begun to question the usefulness of eye training.

Reading = und reltnship btwn words ∴ eye training ≠ useful.

Many native language-to-English dictionaries contain numerous errors and so should be avoided by the student.

Many LI-Eng dictnrs = many errors ∴ avoid.

- 6 ∴ because (of), as, since, for, as a result of, on account of, owing to, due to, now that

A considerable number of speed reading courses are successful since students attending them want to read quickly and are prepared to practise a lot.

Many speed rdng courses = success ∴ stdnts i) want to improve and ii) practise hard.

Almost all dictionaries give guide words at the top of each page: these guide words, often printed in heavy type, can save the reader a great deal of time in locating a particular word.

Can find words quickly ∴ guide words in most dictnrs.

## C Reading: The SQ3R method

Skim through the following text in order to obtain a general idea of the SQ3R method. The maximum time allowed is 90 seconds.

### The SQ3R method

That aspect of reading with which students are most concerned is the study of textbooks. Although studying a textbook encompasses reading, it involves much more than reading. This is demonstrated clearly by what is probably the most popular technique\* for dealing with textbooks. This technique, commonly referred to as the SQ3R method, is described in detail here and is strongly recommended for studying an important text, the contents of which you need to know thoroughly. It consists of the following five steps:

- Survey
- Question
- Read
- Recall
- Revise (or Review)

\*Based on the method developed by F P Robinson and described in *Effective Study*. Harper and Row, 1946.

- 1 *Survey*. Look through the whole of the textbook before studying the various parts in detail. Glancing through the material very rapidly will help to establish a familiarity with the plan and organisation of the book. It will throw light on the aims and the method the author uses to achieve these aims. First, a scrutiny of the title page of the book will provide basic information on the topic of the book. Even the author's name and the date of publication may be of direct relevance. The Preface, Foreword, or Introduction to the book will state the author's aim and describe the various features of the book. It will generally inform you of the audience for whom the book is intended and of the kind of information contained in the book. After skimming through this section, turn next to the Table of Contents for information on the topics contained in the book. This is generally the quickest and the easiest way of determining what the book is about. From the Table of Contents you may be able to see how topics are related to one another and into which broad divisions they fall. Sampling the Index (ie finding out the main references) is also a useful practice when surveying the book. An index provides a more detailed presentation of the topics listed in the Contents section, but does not show the relationship between the topics. If the book is considered useful for your requirements, a rapid survey of the individual chapters will now be necessary. When conducting such a survey, glance at the beginning and the end of each chapter as well as at the various section headings and end-of-chapter summaries (if any). A cursory glance at any glossary and bibliography will complete the survey stage.
- 2 *Question*. The next stage in the process necessitates the formulation of questions and imparts a sense of direction and purpose to the reading. You will probably ask general questions after surveying the book as a whole. For example, what do you need to know? What do you already know? What do you expect to learn from the book? How can you break up the book into sections for study purposes? How can you approach the book? A survey of each individual chapter of the book will then produce more specific questions. The introductory sentences in each chapter and section of the book are of great help in the formulation of specific questions. Occasionally, the author may set out by deliberately posing questions. If headings are used, simply transform each heading into the interrogative, for specific questions will lead to the adoption of an active approach to reading. Always write out your questions either in full or in note-form, dealing with one section or one chapter at a time.
- 3 *Reading*. The next step is to read the book as quickly as possible, but not in the same way as you would read a novel. Indeed, habits arising from reading novels may be harmful when applied to reading textbooks. The reading of a textbook will often of necessity be slower. Frequent regressions may occur, and you may find yourself turning back pages in an effort to understand more clearly the various relationships treated or the arguments developed. The questions formulated in the previous stage should now be answered during the reading, every attempt

being made to approach the book actively. It is not too late to formulate any questions omitted previously and to check them against your preliminary survey and questions. Although many reading specialists would advocate the taking of notes in the next stage, it is possible at this stage to take useful notes from a reasonable unit of text (eg from a section or a chapter). Remember, however, that it is better not to make notes while you are actually going along: try to make them after finishing reading part of the section.

- 4 **Recall.** At the end of each section or chapter, attempt to recall the contents. Read out your original questions and attempt to provide an answer to each question. If a friend or colleague has read the same material, you can formulate questions to ask each other and to discuss. The more frequent the opportunity for recall, the stronger the material will be fixed in your mind. The recall stage is the time to check and amplify your notes – or, if you have not already done so, to make notes. This stage is generally considered to be the most active of the five stages in the SQ3R method, requiring more time to complete than any other stage.
- 5 **Revise.** Revision shortly after the previous steps have been completed is useful in ensuring that the information learnt is retained for a longer time. One method of revision recommended is to look again critically at the material as a whole, writing a form of summary or discussing it comprehensively. Some students prefer to read another textbook on the same topic, checking the new information against the notes they have made and, where necessary, expanding the original notes. Another form of revision recommended for later purposes (ie before an examination) takes the form of a very rapid repetition of the previous four steps in the SQ3R method. Clearly, after the four steps have been completed once, your revision will take only a fraction of the time spent in the first instance.

In conclusion, the SQ3R method is recommended as a means of generating an active participation in study and an intelligent attitude towards the material being studied. It is preferable by far to the widespread habit of opening a book and reading through it page by page, since it ensures a much higher degree of both comprehension and retention.

Pause and think carefully about what you have read. Now list the various steps in the SQ3R method and write at least one sentence about each of the steps.

#### Note-taking practice

After completing the first exercise, check each statement with the text and take outline notes.

#### NOTES

#### The SQ3R Method

SQ3R method = pop

#### 1. Survey

- i) Title page gives basic inf on topic.

- ii) Preface, Fwrd, Intro give aim and poss outline.
- iii) Table of Contents shows reltn of topics to each other.
- iv) Index gives detailed list of topics.
- v) Survey of chapters – skim.
- vi) Glossary and bibliography.

#### 2. Question

Gen qstns from book: specific ones from chs.  
Intro sntnces lead to qstns. [Headings, etc.]  
Qstns encourage active approach.

#### 3. Reading

Read quickly [but ≠ novel: e.g. regressions nec].  
Answer qstns now and ask others.  
Take notes at end of sctn or ch.

#### 4. Recall

= Try to remember reading.  
Read orig qstns – answer. Discuss.  
More opp for recall = better remember.  
Check or make notes.  
Most active stage in SQ3R.

#### 5. Revise

Revise soon \*.\* remember more.  
Rvsn = i) review material and write summary  
+ / or ii) read other text bk on same subj  
+ / or iii) repttn of 4 steps [quick].

#### Writing practice

Using the information in the notes above, describe the SQ3R method, illustrating how you would use it by referring to a textbook which you have recently read.

### D Practice section

- 1 Apply the SQ3R method to this book.

- a Survey:
  - i Make a note of the title, author and date of publication.
  - ii Summarise in one or two sentences the main points in the Introduction.
  - iii Table of Contents: Which of the following topics occupy complete chapters in the book?  
Memory/Research/Dictionaries/Skimming/  
Organisation of study/Note-taking/Reading speed/

Lectures/Topic sentences/Vocabulary/Libraries/  
Timetables/Study skills and objectives/Tutorials/  
Reading textbooks/Health/Writing reports/  
Reading improvement/Abbreviations/  
Examinations/Reference techniques/Studying in  
English

- iv Each unit in the book is divided into 4 sections. Name each of these sections.
  - b Question:
    - i Write down one or two general questions about the book as a whole and one or two questions about some of the specific topics it contains.
    - ii Now write down a few questions arising from a survey of the first reading text in Unit 1.
  - c Read:
    - i Read the text in Unit 1.
    - ii Answer the questions you formulated in the previous stage.
    - iii Now answer the questions on the whole book.
  - d Recall: Make outline notes of the first six chapters.
  - e Revise: After three days, survey the book once more, repeating steps *a-d*.
- 2 Imagine that you are writing a book review for a local university/college/school journal. Write a brief summary of this book, outlining its contents and commenting on those parts which you think will prove useful and on those which will not be so useful.