The PQ4R Method

The PQ4R method is a method used to effectively read and comprehend detailed scientific texts. The emphasis here is on understanding and retaining the content and not on reading speed. The letters P, Q and 4xR stand for the individual steps required to work through the text.

Preview

Browse through all chapters and identify the topics covered. Pay attention to the (sub-) headings and try to divide up the sections that are to be read in one go. The following four steps then apply to each of these sections.

Questions

Formulate questions for each section and note them down.

Read

Read each section carefully and try to answer the aforementioned questions.

Reflect

Consider the content of the section, try to find examples, counter-examples, develop additional arguments or review the arguments given critically and relate these to your previous knowledge of the subject.

Recite

Now, put the text down and try to recall its content. Then try to answer the previously formulated questions again.

Review

After working through an entire chapter with steps 1-5, go through the steps one more time in your head and try to recall the most important aspects. Again, try to answer your questions.

Using this method, it will be much easier for you to retain information from the text than if you were merely reading it – even if it initially seems more time-consuming. Scientific studies have shown that asking your own questions with regard to the text gives you more focus when working through the text. This allows you to better retain information.