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# Reading Comprehension Strategies

Merrimack College Writing Center

# Goals

- Understand the limited role of skimming in reading comprehension.
- Develop strategies in reading comprehension (SQ3R, Paragraph Construction, and Transitional Words).

# Reading vs. Skimming

## When you skim, what *do* you do?

Reading	Skimming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work to understand meaning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quickly glance at material</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look for ideas (thesis, topic sentences)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look for what stands out (bold, italics)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look for structure (organization)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look for visuals</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look for transitions (ideas, words)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maybe look at headings and subheadings</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look for all the things you looked for when “skimming”</li></ul>	



# SQ3R

- Survey
  - Thesis
  - Topic sentences (first and last sentences of each paragraph)
  - Headings
  - Subheadings
  - Bold or italicized words
  - Images & charts

Look for problems & solutions, comparisons & contrasts, cause & effect, process, illustration, classification.

# SQ3R

- Survey
- Question
  - Turn every heading and subheading into a question

Create open-ended questions; emphasize “why” and “how”.

Write them in the margin, or above the original heading, or in your notebook, with some space in between to write in answers.

This step allows you to set up expectations in your reading.



# SQ3R

- Survey
- Question
- Read
  - Read to answer the questions (active vs. passive reading)

Reading with a goal better engages your brain, and helps you see whether or not the work meets your expectations.

# SQ3R

- Survey
- Question
- Read
- Recite
  - Talk about what you read
  - Discuss what you understood
  - Try to clarify what you didn't understand

Discussion helps internalize the knowledge, and will help you retain it when you need or want to recall it.



# SQ3R

- Survey
- Question
- Read
- Recite
- Review
  - Compare what you thought and discussed to what was in the text. How much did you retain? Were your questions answered?



# Structure of an Academic Paragraph

1. Claim: the topic sentence or main point of the paragraph
2. Evidence: proof (the author's or a source's) that helps support the claim
3. Discussion: the way the author connects evidence to claim to thesis.



# Transitional Words

- Coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet)
- Conjunctive adverbs (however, therefore, thus, hence, nevertheless, etc.)
- Dependent clause markers (when, because, if, after, while, although, etc.)
- Transitions that show the patterns of organization (Harris Prentice Hall Reference Guide handout)



# Transitions Show Relationships

FAQs & How To's  
Question & Correct  
Compare & Correct

Writing Processes  
1-42

Writing for College and Career  
43-98

136

trans  
20d

Transitions

As soon as you reached the word *therefore*, you knew that some consequence or result would follow.

The transitions listed in the following table are grouped according to the categories of relationships they show.

## TRANSITIONS

<b>Adding</b>	and, besides, in addition, also, too, moreover, further, furthermore, next, first, second, third, finally, last, again, and then, likewise, similarly
<b>Comparing</b>	similarly, likewise, in like manner, at the same time, in the same way
<b>Contrasting</b>	but, yet, however, still, nevertheless, on the other hand, on the contrary, in contrast, conversely, in another sense, instead, rather, notwithstanding, though, whereas, after all, although
<b>Emphasizing</b>	indeed, in fact, above all, add to this, and also, even more, in any event, in other words, that is, obviously
<b>Ending</b>	after all, finally, in sum, for these reasons
<b>Giving examples</b>	for example, for instance, to illustrate, that is, namely, specifically
<b>Pointing to cause and effect, proof, or conclusions</b>	thus, therefore, consequently, because of this, hence, as a result, then, so, accordingly
<b>Showing place or direction</b>	over, above, inside, next to, underneath, to the left, to the right, just behind, beyond, in the distance
<b>Showing time</b>	meanwhile, soon, later, afterward, now, in the past, then, next, before, during, while, finally, after this, at last, since then, presently, temporarily, after a short time, at the same time, in the meantime
<b>Summarizing</b>	to sum up, in brief, on the whole, in conclusion, that is, finally, as has been said, in general, to recapitulate, to conclude, in other words

Harris, M. & Kunka, J. (2015). *Prentice hall reference guide* (9th ed.). New York: Prentice Hall



# Information for Documentation & Citation

Author: Robert T. Koch Jr. & Rachel Silsbee

Title: Reading Comprehension Strategies

Website: Merrimack College Writing Center

Year: 2017

URL: [https://www.merrimack.edu/academics/academic\\_support/academic\\_success\\_center/writing\\_center/resources/](https://www.merrimack.edu/academics/academic_support/academic_success_center/writing_center/resources/)





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