

## STUDY ADVICE for ACCA – “The Art of Reading”

1. INTRODUCTION
2. SQ3R
3. SCAN READING
4. YOUR READING ENVIRONMENT

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"Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to talk for discourse; but to weigh and consider."

Francis Bacon - Essay: Of Studies

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The "Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary" defines a student as "one who studies, *one devoted to books* or to any study, one who is enrolled for a course of instruction in a college or institution ....".

Certainly students enrolled on a course leading to professional exams will spend a *large* proportion of their study time reading. This particularly applies to you because of the extensive study material included in a Tony Surridge e-book. In order to maximise the use of your e-book material you'll need to become very adept in the art of reading.

The purpose of this free e-guide is to *help you become more efficient in your study reading* and to draw your attention to the ways in which you may be able to improve your approach to studying using our e-books.

Learning from reading is more than just sitting, opening a book and becoming absorbed in prose. Reading for pleasure is something most people do for recreation and relaxation and we all have our favourite authors and titles. However reading with the purpose of learning is different and requires a different attitude and approach. Study reading involves *interpretation, understanding and analysis* of ideas and the extraction of relevant points so they can be organised in a way which best suits learning and revision. Furthermore, reading for study purposes is not necessarily pleasurable - it can be hard work, although interesting, and often requires personal resolution and stamina.

The points to be considered include:

- SQ3R
- Search reading
- Scan reading
- Your reading environment

### 2. SQ3R

The mnemonic SQ3R describes a systematic approach to reading and can be adapted to almost any form of study material, including e-book study text and model answers. It can be used for reading whole e-books, or separate tutorials (chapters and sections), or articles from professional publications, magazines and newspapers.

The mnemonic stands for the five steps in reading:

1. *Survey*
2. *Question*
3. *Read*
4. *Recall*
5. *Review*

## STEP 1 - SURVEY

The purpose of surveying study material is to get a "birdseye view" of the material, what is involved, how long it may take to read, what other references may be required and which points are more important than others. In other words a survey (or reconnoitre) will enable you to plan your reading activity and will help you to be selective in what you need. This stage (or type of reading) is often termed '*skimming*'

A survey of a Tony Surridge e-guide would involve two things:

(a) Consider the whole work

The title of the e-book "**Study Text: A routemap through the syllabus: ACCA Paper P4**" will tell you quite a lot about what is contained within.

The contents page will also provide a mine of information; it'll give you a synopsis of what the work includes. It also gives you an insight to the author, what (s)he considers important, the sequence in which (s)he has placed the topics and the space which (s)he has allocated to the different topics.

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Consider the Contents for this guide:

1. INTRODUCTION
2. SQ3R
3. SCAN READING
4. YOUR READING ENVIRONMENT

This clearly sets out the 4 areas which are important to your private study and will help you pass your professional exams.

The size of the work is also relevant and by thumbing through the pages, and reading a few by random selection, you'll "get a feel" for what is involved and how the work is structured.

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(b) Consider each Chapter

Each tutorial (chapter or section) within an e-book can be surveyed. The Tony Surridge e-book series presents study material in such a way that each section within a tutorial starts by outlining the main topical areas being discussed. This clearly indicates what is covered within the section and facilitates 'survey reading'.

It's possible therefore to get a very quick idea about what is involved in a tutorial by reading the 'outline'. Also, of course one can get the 'feel' of it by scrolling through the pages on your computer screen.

The survey stage will tell you quite a lot about the material and how you should plan to read it.

## STEP 2 - QUESTION

Once you have finished *surveying* the material you can establish your purpose for reading it by posing questions, some of which may have been answered by survey and others will be answered by a detailed reading of the text.

Initial questions may include:

- What is covered by the material?
- Is it general or specific?
- How long will it take to read?
- What topics are covered?
- Are the topics related to each other or to other areas of study?
- Can specific questions be answered by reading the material?

It's important to have the purpose for reading study material clearly in your mind *before you start*. One way to achieve this is to pose **QUESTIONS** to which you'll want to find answers within the text. Some students review past exam questions *before* they start reading study material and will keep these in mind while they are reading. The Tony Surridge e-book series has been designed to accommodate students who take a 'questioning' approach to reading. Typically students can transfer from their study material to relevant questions with worked answers by the use of hyperlinks (meaning an instant 'click' transfer). When you progress through the e-book, questions will include matters previously studied on a cumulative basis. It's beneficial for you to consider these questions *during your survey* and then to work through them *after* you have finished your reading.

Questions will provide the purpose and stimulus for your reading. By adopting the 'questioning' approach to reading you'll become *an active investigator rather than a passive recipient*.

### **STEP 3 - READ**

There are different ways of reading and some of these will be described later. For instance one can "Skim read" (see step 1 above), "Read in depth", "Search read" or "Scan read" and each technique is relevant depending upon what is being read and why.

When reading with the purpose of learning one is not able to relax and 'switch off' - on the contrary, this kind of reading calls for concentration and application. Remember we have just deduced that a student is an active investigator and not a passive recipient.

When "reading in depth" it's useful to read the text three times:

- (a) First read straight through without stopping

Don't stop to take notes, and if you are reading an e-book printout, don't underline words or phrases (after all you don't know what is important yet) and try to concentrate on the sense of the writing, taking particular attention to understand the main ideas being proposed or discussed.

- (b) Read through a second time

This time pay more attention to detail. You now have the sense of the text and know how it hangs together. Pay particular attention to the important aspects and highlight areas which you will wish to extract into note format later. Do this by using slips of paper, underlining, using coloured inks or by putting check marks in the margin. At this stage you'll be reading critically, detecting the hierarchy of ideas and evaluating and analysing the views put forward.

- (c) Read through a third time and make notes

At the third time of reading you'll be *producing* more than you are taking in. You will need to read slowly and deliberately in order to confirm that you do understand the sense of the text and have identified the important points which need to be organised in note format. At this stage you should *make notes* but do so by using *your own words* and don't merely transcribe those of the author. Your attention is drawn to the Tony Surridge free e-guide '**The Art of Notetaking**' which offers advice on this aspect of private study.

### **STEP 4 - RECALL**

If passing exams only involved reading and understanding what is written, the task of studying would be somewhat easier. However, the examiner will want to be satisfied that you have learned (or *remembered*) the requirements of the exam syllabus. The business of learning does not stop with reading. Not many people are gifted with exceptional powers of memory and most people forget 40% or more of what they read within hours of putting down a book.

Recall is an important part of learning. It's an *active* part of studying and will *take up a lot of study time*.

Once you have systematically read the material three times (see Step 3 above) you should continue to read it over and over again with the purpose of memorising relevant points. During this stage you should pause at regular intervals and try to reproduce the main points you have read. This exercise should be extended to include your notes which you should read, recall, read, recall and so on. The Tony Surridge '**E-Mnemonics – Remembering Vital Points**' should help you in this.

Don't just think you can remember points - test yourself, or better still ask a member of your family or one of your friends to test you. Write down the key points and be prepared to expand on them in order to produce a good answer

bearing in mind the standard required by the examiner.

Self-assessment questions are included in most courses to enable you to test and satisfy yourself on your powers of recall. It's easy to be over-confident about how much one actually *knows* and you should treat the self-assessment questions very seriously and work through them *at least* once but preferably two or three times.

### **STEP 5 – REVIEW**

The purpose of the review stage is to check that:

- (a) you have achieved what you set out to do;
- (b) your knowledge is sound; and
- (c) you have positive recall.

The best approach to reviewing is to quickly repeat the previous four steps:

1. Re-survey the text
2. Re-appraise the questions you asked. Have they been answered? Do new questions come to mind?
3. Re-read the text to ensure you've really got the sense of it and have identified the points which require recall.
4. Satisfy yourself with your ability to recall by ensuring you can answer all the relevant self-assessment questions included in your e-book course.

The five stages of SQ3R have been tried and tested by thousands of students. You may need to adapt it to fit your own particular style of reading, but the basic idea allows sufficient flexibility for you to use the approach in different ways and still achieve a high degree of 'reading efficiency'.

### **3. SEARCH READING**

This 'speed reading' technique requires you to search for certain key words or phrases which relate to specific points about which you require information. In other words, your eyes will be passing quickly over irrelevant words and sentences stopping only on words or phrases which have a bearing on, or are pertinent to, the subject in which you're interested. One important point to note about 'search reading' however, is that the words used in the text may not necessarily be exactly the same as the reference for which you're searching.

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#### **EXAMPLE**

Read the article below with the sole purpose of finding out the importance of the 'Purchase Order Progressing Department'.

#### **PRODUCTION PLANNING**

..... The production planning department will have to undertake the requisition and acquisition of the materials required to complete the production programme. Again, this must be done as early as possible within the production planning sequence if the department is to ensure that the required delivery date is to be met. In doing this, the production planning department will also maintain a close liaison with the production activity. One common problem is that of the non-availability of materials or long lead times in the delivery of materials. To overcome these problems the production planning department must maintain its liaison with the materials control department and attempt to build an element of flexibility into its production programme to allow for the postponement of certain operations until the materials become available. Unfortunately, certain manufacturing processes, for example the mass-production of articles, mean that the delivery of materials becomes a crucial and limiting factor for the process overall. In industries which practise mass-production techniques, for example, the delivery of materials is vital to the success of the production programme. Failure to have materials delivered on time to the assembly line will mean that the production programme will be seriously delayed. The reason for this is that firms practising mass-production techniques do not carry large stocks of materials and as a result the supply of materials is critical. A similar situation can occur when a firm has decided to sub-contract part of the production requirement. In this situation the decision to sub-contract will have to be taken as early

as possible so that arrangements can be made and delays do not occur .....

You'll have noticed when reading this extract that the phrase "Purchase Order progressing Department" is not actually used, but the importance of it is *implied* in several places. For instance ...."*Failure to have the materials delivered on time to the assembly line will mean that the production programme will be seriously delayed.*"

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If you 'speed read' a passage by *searching* you'll be using a very efficient approach to the kind of studying which requires certain points, or concepts, or ideas to be investigated or substantiated.

#### 4. SCAN READING

Scanning is a technique of speed reading that is used when you know *exactly* what you're looking for. It's a simpler task than 'search reading' because it involves little more than matching similar words or phrases, whereas far more thinking is required in 'search reading'.

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#### EXAMPLE

Read the following paragraph with the sole purpose of finding out what techniques were evolved and documented in the USA in 1957 and 1958.

#### HISTORY OF NETWORK ANALYSIS

The history of this technique, like so many good ideas, is lost in the mists of claim, counterclaim, rumour and vague memories. It has been stated that a similar technique may have been used in the preparation of the Mulberry Harbours during the second world war. However, it is certain that in 1957 and 1958 two techniques were evolved and documented in the USA. This first one was PERT (Program [or project] Evaluation and Review Technique). The second was CPM - Critical Path Methods. Initially these were distinct techniques, the first being 'event' orientated and the second being 'activity' orientated. Over the years, however, the boundaries between them have become more and more indistinct and the subject is now almost a unified whole, incorporating the best of both methods. There are many alternative names given to the overall technique, including Critical Path Analysis and Network Analysis. In fact, a recent survey discovered more than 100 synonyms for this subject in use in various parts of the world.

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You should have got the right answer within seconds!

'Scan reading' like 'Search reading' is a very efficient speed reading technique, but you're required to have a clear idea of what you're seeking to learn from the material or what you want to find from it.

#### 5. YOUR READING ENVIRONMENT

Apart from the way you read, the *physical conditions in which you read* will have bearing on your reading efficiency.

Points which need to be borne in mind are considered below:

(a) LIGHT

- (i) Don't read in a position where a light shines in your eyes.
- (ii) Don't read in a circle of light surrounded by darkness.
- (iii) Don't have reflective surfaces in your field of vision as you read.
- (iv) Position your desk lamp (if you have one) so that it does not cast a shadow over your computer screen or the material you're reading.
- (v) Try to have the light coming from a source positioned over your head or from behind your shoulder.

- (vi) Always avoid glare.
- (vii) When arranging your light, consider the size and colour scheme of the room.

(b) **EYESIGHT**

Reading for a professional qualification can place a considerable strain on your eyes. If you find that you get headaches or soreness in your eyes during or after your study periods perhaps you should consider having your eyes tested. You may well find that you need glasses for study purposes but the need for them may well lapse after you have completed your studies and gained your professional qualification.

(c) **HEATING AND VENTILATION**

- (i) Don't work in a temperature which is either too hot or too cold. *A sensible temperature is one which you don't notice.*
- (ii) Don't work in a small heated area surrounded by cold air. Try to work in a room where the heat is evenly distributed and in which you can walk freely about without having to undergo severe temperature changes.
- (iii) Ensure the room is well ventilated.

(d) **DESK AND CHAIR**

- (i) If your reading involves note making, it's sensible to sit at a desk or table. Usually when you're looking at a computer screen you are sitting at a table or desk.
- (ii) If you intend to read continuously, for e-book printouts an armchair may be more suitable.
- (iii) If you're sitting at a desk or table ensure that your chair is the correct size and height to present the correct angle between the book and your line of vision and for the print to be the right distance from your eyes.

**For further advice and guidance on best health and safety practice we suggest you refer to [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) .**

[www.tonysurridge.co.uk](http://www.tonysurridge.co.uk)

For more free study advice, visit [www.tonysurridge.co.uk/exam-material/study-advice](http://www.tonysurridge.co.uk/exam-material/study-advice)



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