

Tips on effective reading

Reading is a common way of acquiring knowledge. As doctors we read textbooks, journals and other medical literature. Here are some tips to make reading more worthwhile:

Don't read everything

Effective reading begins with selecting what to read. Only read what is important and relevant to you; be ruthless on rejecting irrelevant information. Accept that you cannot keep up to date in all areas. Identify topics of interest and try to keep abreast of developments in these areas.

Categorise material

Make 3 lists:

- That which you need to assimilate and apply; read this part actively and thoroughly
- That which you just need to be aware of; skim this category
- That which you do not need; throw away the material in this last part

To improve memory

Apply the 5-stage **PQRST** method when reading a book:

Preview:

Read the outline of the chapter/material you want to read: section headings/summary; this will allow you the opportunity to get the essence of it.

Question:

Ask yourself questions about each section of the chapter: what are the main points it is trying to make?

Read:

Try to answer these questions by reading the material

Self-recitation:

Recall and recite the main points

Test:

Test yourself on the understanding of the new information; how well have you grasped the key points?

Other tips:

Use chunking (grouping similar items of information together), mind mapping or visualisation techniques to aid retention and recall of the information.

Adopt a positive attitude to reading and motivate yourself to read more effectively.

Bibliography:

Suresh K: "Tips on...effective reading", BMJ Careers, 5/1/2002, s7