

SELF-MONITORING APPROACH TO READING AND THINKING (S.M.A.R.T.)

S.M.A.R.T. is designed to facilitate remembering via understanding. Users should be cautioned: when using S.M.A.R.T., do not try to memorize anything, try to understand. Remembering comes much easier after understanding, and understanding often eliminates the need to memorize.

1. Survey the reading assignment and identify several logical points in the section where you will stop to check your understanding (e.g., after subsections.) Rarely should you study more than two pages without reviewing in order to better understand
2. As you read each segment of the text, do the following:
 - a) put a check in the margin where you understand.
 - b) put a question mark in the margin where you do not understand
3. After reading each segment, clarify what you understand as follows:
 - a) explain to yourself (in your own words) what you do not understand (yes, you can look in the back of the text while you do this!)
 - b) examine what you do not understand and do these things:
 - i) read again the part that you did not understand (does the extra reading help?)
 - ii) try to identify what is causing the problem (e.g., is it a word, a phrase, or a relationship?)
 - iii) try to think of something you might do to help you understand
 - iv) if you could think of something to help you understand (e.g., the glossary, a graph, reviewing the previous text) try it out! If you eventually understand something that was causing a problem, erase the question mark and replace it with a check.
 - v) explain to yourself what you still do not understand (e.g., "I still don't understand how the assassination of Ferdinand was a cause of World War One!")
4. Continue to the next segment. Repeat steps 2 and 3 above.
5. After clarifying your understanding and non-understanding in each segment, return to any preceding segments and re-examine what you previously identified as items that you do not understand. Do they make any sense now? If not, don't worry, continue. If so, it is probably because you learned something new in the

last segment and that means that a question mark can now be replaced with a check.

6. When you finish the entire selection, do the following:
 - a) close the book and explain to yourself what you understand.
 - b) look back at the text and refresh your memory for anything that you left out (don't worry about what you do not understand and don't try to memorize it; you can ask someone about it later.)
 - c) re-examine what you still do not understand. Think about those items. What could they possibly mean? Is there anything that you could do to understand them?

7. Close the book and explain to yourself one last time what you understood.

Joseph L. Vaughan, East Texas State University