brightstudy

FREE RESOURCE — TEMPLATE

Textbook and Reading Notes Template

An SQ3R-based template for reading chapters and papers so you finish with questions answered and a summary, not just highlighted pages.

5	6	3	1
SQ3R STAGES	CHAPTER TEMPLATES	PAPER TEMPLATES	"SO WHAT" PER READING

SQ3R · QUESTIONS · KEY TERMS · PAPERS

PREPARED BY	CATEGORY	EDITION	LATEST VERSION
BrightStudy	Note-taking	2026, A4 PDF	brightstudy.ai/resources/reading-notes-template

What is inside

Highlighting a chapter feels like work and produces nothing you can revise from. SQ3R (survey, question, read, recite, review) replaces it with a method that ends in notes you own: skim the structure first, turn every heading into a question, read to answer the questions, close the book and recite the answers, then review the page. This template holds the questions and answers side by side, adds a key-terms box and a "so what" line, and includes a version for academic papers with sections for method, findings and critique.

SECTIONS

1. SQ3R
2. Chapter reading 1
3. Chapter reading 2
4. Chapter reading 3
5. Chapter reading 4
6. Chapter reading 5
7. Chapter reading 6
8. Paper reading 1
9. Paper reading 2
10. Paper reading 3
11. Reading list tracker

WHO IT IS FOR

A level students reading textbooks independently and university students working through reading lists and journal articles.

WHAT IS INCLUDED

- SQ3R explained on one page with timings for a typical chapter
- Chapter template: survey notes, question-answer table, key terms, "so what"
- Academic paper template: claim, method, findings, limitations, use
- Reading list tracker for a term or module
- Six chapter templates and three paper templates

01
SQ3R

Timings are for a twenty-page textbook chapter. Papers are faster; see the paper template.

STAGE	TIME	WHAT YOU DO
Survey	3 min	Title, headings, figures, bold terms, end-of-chapter summary and questions. Note the structure.
Question	3 min	Turn each heading into a question. Add questions from the syllabus or lecture.
Read	20-30 min	Read to answer the questions. Note answers in the table, in your own words. Mark terms for the key-terms box.
Recite	5 min	Close the book. Cover the answers. Answer each question aloud or in writing. Mark any you could not.
Review	5 min, then spaced	Write the summary and the "so what" line. Add the page to your spaced review schedule.

- Answers in your own words, or you are copying, not reading.
- If a question is unanswered after the read, the chapter did not cover it: note where to look.
- Key terms: the term, a one-line definition, and the page number.
- Highlight nothing until the question stage; then highlight only answers.

02

Chapter reading 1

Book and chapter _____ Pages _____ Date _____

SURVEY: STRUCTURE AND WHAT IT COVERS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION (FROM THE HEADING)	ANSWER (OWN WORDS)

KEY TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION	PAGE

SUMMARY AND "SO WHAT" FOR MY COURSE

03

Chapter reading 2

Book and chapter _____ Pages _____ Date _____

SURVEY: STRUCTURE AND WHAT IT COVERS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION (FROM THE HEADING)	ANSWER (OWN WORDS)

KEY TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION	PAGE

SUMMARY AND "SO WHAT" FOR MY COURSE

04

Chapter reading 3

Book and chapter _____ Pages _____ Date _____

SURVEY: STRUCTURE AND WHAT IT COVERS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION (FROM THE HEADING)	ANSWER (OWN WORDS)

KEY TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION	PAGE

SUMMARY AND "SO WHAT" FOR MY COURSE

05

Chapter reading 4

Book and chapter _____ Pages _____ Date _____

SURVEY: STRUCTURE AND WHAT IT COVERS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION (FROM THE HEADING)	ANSWER (OWN WORDS)

KEY TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION	PAGE

SUMMARY AND "SO WHAT" FOR MY COURSE

06

Chapter reading 5

Book and chapter _____ Pages _____ Date _____

SURVEY: STRUCTURE AND WHAT IT COVERS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION (FROM THE HEADING)	ANSWER (OWN WORDS)

KEY TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION	PAGE

SUMMARY AND "SO WHAT" FOR MY COURSE

07

Chapter reading 6

Book and chapter _____ Pages _____ Date _____

SURVEY: STRUCTURE AND WHAT IT COVERS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION (FROM THE HEADING)	ANSWER (OWN WORDS)

KEY TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION	PAGE

SUMMARY AND "SO WHAT" FOR MY COURSE

08

Paper reading 1

Authors and year _____ Title

_____

CLAIM (ONE SENTENCE: WHAT THE PAPER ARGUES OR FINDS)

METHOD (DESIGN, SAMPLE, MEASURES; WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE)

FINDINGS (THE TWO OR THREE RESULTS THAT MATTER, WITH NUMBERS)

LIMITATIONS AND CRITIQUE (WHAT IT CANNOT SHOW; WHAT YOU WOULD CHALLENGE)

HOW I WILL USE IT (WHICH ESSAY, ARGUMENT OR EXAM TOPIC)

KEY QUOTATION WITH PAGE NUMBER

09

Paper reading 2

Authors and year _____ Title

_____

CLAIM (ONE SENTENCE: WHAT THE PAPER ARGUES OR FINDS)

METHOD (DESIGN, SAMPLE, MEASURES; WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE)

FINDINGS (THE TWO OR THREE RESULTS THAT MATTER, WITH NUMBERS)

LIMITATIONS AND CRITIQUE (WHAT IT CANNOT SHOW; WHAT YOU WOULD CHALLENGE)

HOW I WILL USE IT (WHICH ESSAY, ARGUMENT OR EXAM TOPIC)

KEY QUOTATION WITH PAGE NUMBER

10

Paper reading 3

Authors and year _____ Title

_____

CLAIM (ONE SENTENCE: WHAT THE PAPER ARGUES OR FINDS)

METHOD (DESIGN, SAMPLE, MEASURES; WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE)

FINDINGS (THE TWO OR THREE RESULTS THAT MATTER, WITH NUMBERS)

LIMITATIONS AND CRITIQUE (WHAT IT CANNOT SHOW; WHAT YOU WOULD CHALLENGE)

HOW I WILL USE IT (WHICH ESSAY, ARGUMENT OR EXAM TOPIC)

KEY QUOTATION WITH PAGE NUMBER

11

Reading list tracker

READING	MODULE / TOPIC	PRIORITY (CORE / USEFUL / SKIM)	DONE	NOTES PAGE

Keep going

BRIGHTSTUDY

This resource covers the part of studying that happens away from a screen. BrightStudy does the rest: upload your notes, slides or recordings and it turns them into Study Docs, flashcards and exam-style questions, then schedules your reviews with spaced repetition. There is a free plan to get started.

PAIRS WELL WITH NOTE-TAKING

FEATURE	WHAT IT DOES	LINK
Study Docs	Structured notes you can read, edit and study from.	brightstudy.ai/features/study-docs
Document Uploads	PDFs, slides and typed or handwritten notes.	brightstudy.ai/features/upload
Recordings	Record or upload audio for your learning.	brightstudy.ai/features/recordings
Image Extraction	Bring the figures from your documents into your notes.	brightstudy.ai/features/image-extraction

RELATED RESOURCES

RESOURCE	LINK
Cornell Notes Template	brightstudy.ai/resources/cornell-notes-template
Lecture Capture Sheet	brightstudy.ai/resources/lecture-capture-sheet
Sketchnoting Starter Pack	brightstudy.ai/resources/sketchnoting-starter-pack



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