



White Board

Become An Effective Teacher & Save Your Valuable Teaching Time and Energy

Center for Effective Undergraduate Teaching (864) 388-8426

2,700 Minutes: How to Make the Most of Your Office Hours

MOST FACULTY SCHEDULE at least three office hours per week—that's 2,700 minutes a semester. If you have 135 students, that's 20 minutes for each student. Even if you have 270 students, that's still 10 minutes per student. Recently, I've been working to make the most of these 2,700 minutes of office hours. They offer prime time for one-to-one mentoring. In the process, my thinking about office hours has shifted a bit and I'm using my office hours in more ways. Consequently I have had a greater number of students taking advantage of this learning opportunity.

Two Shifts in Thinking

Rather than arbitrarily selecting any three hours during the week, I recommend selecting times that maximize the number of students who can meet with you during office hours, recognizing the constraints that today's college students face. They may be attending college part time, working full time, and commuting to campus.

- 1. Timing.** It's best to consult with your students before deciding when you'll hold office hours and then schedule times convenient for them. In all likelihood this rules out early Monday morning or Friday evenings, and that heavily scheduled 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. time frame on Tuesdays and Thursdays (on my campus at least). I recommend three different week days, and I wouldn't rule out virtual office hours held at other times.
- 2. Staging.** Move aside everything physically and psychologically that will interfere with devoting this time to students. If you share an office, stagger hours with your office mate. Use every way possible to let students know when you hold office hours; post them on your door, put them on the syllabus, position them prominently on the course website, announce them in class. Have a chair ready. Put away your cell phone.

Turn away from your computer. Put peppermints in a bowl on your desk.

Seven Ways to Interact with Students During Office Hours

- 1. Teach.** Tell students that class attendance and note-taking is expected in your course, but also make clear that questions and additional help are available during office hours. Students sometimes think that professors are not willing to review content again in the office. I'm not suggesting that you do more than teach. Students are responsible for doing the hard work of learning, but you can certainly help them do that during office hours.
 - 2. Advise.** Students do come to faculty offices with forms that need to be signed. Make the most of this time by being more than a bureaucrat. Ask a few questions of your own. Listen to their concerns. What information does the student need to succeed in your program beyond your signature?
 - 3. Collaborate.** If you encourage students to seek out additional sources on topics introduced in class and they bring materials to your office, ask them about it. I am always surprised by how few students say that they are never asked direct and challenging questions about the interesting topics and projects they are working on. It's a chance to give them practice answering questions like, "What's your research question?" "What have you found so far?"
 - 4. Offer books.** Like me, you probably have a decent personal library. You may have some duplicate copies of key texts or can know where you can buy used copies of the classics in your field. Lend them out or give them away. Geoffrey Canada, the charismatic school principal and subject of Paul Tough's *Whatever It*
- Takes, talks about a professor who gave him an unassigned statistics book from his personal collection. That book helped him pass the hardest course of his undergraduate major. My experience has been the same. I cherish those books given to me by my professors.
- 5. Listen well.** Use all the active listening strategies you've ever learned to make this meeting memorable. I recommend taking notes, jotting names, phrases and details of the conversation so that you can refer to these topics next time you talk with the student. If you are meeting with several students on the same day, this kind of record keeping is essential.
 - 6. Mentorship.** Students do ask us questions about majors, careers, graduate school, and internships. Sharing your own educational and work trajectory can be very insightful. You can also direct students to alumni, library resources, and web sites that will help them make their own decisions. If students need advice that is beyond your expertise, be prepared to say so. Know the phone numbers for student

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Mid-Term Week - Feb 17-21
Mid-Term Grades Due - Feb 24

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2019-2020 Publication Dates
First Monday of the Month

September 3	March 2
October 7	April 6
November 4	May 4
December 2	June 1
January 6	July 6
February 3	August 3

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Center for Effective
Undergraduate Teaching
Carnel Learning Center, Suite 106.
Phone: 388-8426

Reading Textbooks: The College Plague

FIRST, LET'S ACKNOWLEDGE this universal epidemic. College students despise reading textbooks and e-books that cover content with academic information. Fortunately, I discovered a cure for the reading plague that only requires five teaspoons of ingestion: 1) survey 2) question 3) read 4) retrieve and 5) review. In my class, I have found the SQ3R Method to be a step-by-step approach to learning and studying from textbooks. Although it took my students time and practice to master this method, it has been valuable in regards to preparing students for more content-driven class discussions, increased retention and understanding of information, strategic study skills, and test preparation.

At the beginning of each semester, I introduce to my students the SQ3R Method—it was originally devised to read college textbooks in a systematic approach. Students need to understand that this approach is completely different from casual reading; instead, it is a strategy for productive academic reading. In my attempt to get students to be more intentional and actively engaged, I began to embed the SQ3R Method into my instruction.

SQ3R Method

The SQ3R Method is a reading comprehension and study skills method named for its five steps: survey, question, read, retrieve and review. This method was introduced by Francis R. Robinson in 1946. In class, students receive several copies of a graphic organizer to use when reading, along with an explanation of each step. The template explains:

- 1. Survey** – Record important titles, subtitles, captions, subheadings, graphics, illustrations, highlighted text and vocabulary words from the chapter (students are not reading at this point).
- 2. Question** – Turn each heading into a question before you start to read
- 3. Read** – Read to find the answers to the questions and write the answers below
- 4. Recite** – In your own words, write what you have just read. Write summary sentences that paraphrase the key ideas

and main points.

- 5. Review** – Write the important details from the chapter. Create a short outline, or concepts map of what you read, or what you need to remember to do well on the test.

In completing each step, I found that many students benefited from step 4 (Recite). When students were given an opportunity to write in their own words about a key idea(s), they were able to fully understand core concepts about different theories and principles. This led to expert understanding that was preceded by enriched classroom discourse.

SQ3R Student Survey

At the end of each semester, I like to get feedback from my students. I do this because their feedback helps me to improve the quality of my instruction. In all that I do, student test data and feedback guides my instructional decision making. The fall 2019 student survey responses revealed:

Does the SQ3R Strategy hold you accountable to read your textbook/ebook?

94%- Yes 6%- No

Does the SQ3R Strategy help you to retain information from the textbook/ebook?

79%- Yes 21%- No

Does the SQ3R Strategy help you to “chunk information for understanding what is being read?”

94%- Yes 6%- No

Does the SQ3R Strategy help you to prepare for taking a test?

86%- Yes 14%- No

Have you transferred the SQ3R Strategy to other courses that you are taking?

7%- Yes 93%- No

Does the SQ3R Strategy contribute meaningful classroom discussion

100%- Yes 0%- No

From my students' feedback, I can conclude that the SQ3R Strategy has been effective in my classes. In order to generate its

effectiveness, I had to guide my students through consistent rehearsals which required repetition. This allowed information to convert from short-term memory to long-term memory. However, to my chagrin, I was surprised that students did not transfer the use of the SQ3R Strategy to other classes. As I began seeking for reasons why, students explained that the strategy “actually” required them to read and held them accountable for attending classes prepared. In other words, the students did not want to intentionally read with purpose.

In my future efforts to get students to understand the importance of the SQ3R Strategy beyond my class, I must change their mindsets through sharing data outcomes regarding their grades and demonstrating how self-efficacy drives success. Overall, the SQ3R Strategy helped my students improve their comprehension, efficiency in reading, and study skills.

Dr. Dimple J. Martin; Reading Textbooks: The College Plague; Faculty Focus; January 29, 2020 [<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-teaching-strategies/reading-textbooks-the-college-plague/>] January 30, 2020.

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support services, and educate your self so that you know when students need professional rather than academic assistance.

- 7. Student Feedback.** Don't put students on the spot and ask for specific feedback on your course or department. This can put students in a difficult position. Remember that office hours are for students' benefit. Keep every conversation professional.

Two-thousand, seven-hundred minutes seems like a lot of time. It's good to reflect on how this interactive teaching time is being spent. Are there ways to make the experience more beneficial for students?

Dr. Margaret Walsh; 2,700 Minutes: How to Make the Most of Your Office Hours; Faculty Focus; January 10, 2020 [<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/office-hours/>] January 28, 2020.