

Previewing, Summarizing, and Reviewing

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about three strategies that form a process for approaching academic texts that may be particularly long or difficult. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Previewing

1a. How to Preview

2. Summarizing

2a. How to Summarize

3. Reviewing

3a. How to Review

1. Previewing

Previewing is a strategy that readers use to recall prior knowledge and set a purpose for reading. It calls for readers to skim a text before reading, looking for various features and information that will help as they return to read it in detail later. In other words, previewing a text helps readers prepare for what they are about to read.



HINT

Think of previewing a text as similar to creating a movie trailer. A successful preview for either a movie or a reading experience will capture what the overall work is going to be about, what general expectations the audience can have of the experience to come, how the piece is structured, and what kinds of patterns will emerge.



TERM TO KNOW

Previewing

A reading strategy that involves surveying a text in order to recall prior knowledge and set a purpose for reading.

1a. How to Preview

The genre of the text determines the reader's methods for previewing:

- Readers preview nonfiction to find out what they know about the subject and what they want to find out. It also helps them understand how an author has organized information.
- Readers preview fiction to determine characters, setting, and plot. They also preview to make predictions about the story's problems and solutions.

Therefore, when readers preview a text before they read, they first ask themselves whether the text is fiction or nonfiction:

- If the text is nonfiction, readers look at the text's features and illustrations (and their captions) to determine the subject matter and decide what they know about the subject and what they still need to find out.
- If the text is fiction, readers look at the title, chapter headings, introductory notes, and illustrations for a better understanding of the content and possible settings or events.



BIG IDEA

Previewing engages your prior experience and asks you to think about what you already know about the subject matter, author, or publication, and then anticipate what new information might be ahead of you when you return to read the text more closely.

2. Summarizing

Are you familiar with the phrase, "The best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else"?

Summarizing a source is a very similar process to teaching someone the content– but in this case, the student you're teaching is yourself.

Summarizing, or condensing someone else's ideas and putting them into your own shortened form, allows you to be sure that you've accurately captured the main point of the text you're reading.



TERM TO KNOW

Summarizing

A reading strategy that involves condensing someone else's ideas and putting them in your own words.

2a. How to Summarize

The following is a general process for summarizing during and after reading.



STEP BY STEP

1. Underline important information and write key words in the margin.
2. Record ideas using a two-column note-taking system. Record questions you have about the text's concepts in the left column and answers you find in the reading in the right column.
3. Identify how the concepts relate to what you already know, then add examples and details.

4. For retaining key ideas as you read, write a summary statement at the end of each paragraph or section.
5. For capturing the major ideas of the entire work, write a summary paragraph that describes the entire text. These summary statements will be very useful to draw from in the final step of the reading process, reviewing.

For longer, overall summary projects that capture an entire reading, consider these guidelines for writing a summary:

- A summary should contain the thesis or main idea of the text.
- A summary is written in your own words, so it contains few or no quotations.
- A summary is always shorter than the original text, often about 1/3 as long as the original. An article or paper may be summarized in a few sentences or a couple of paragraphs; a book may be summarized in an article or a short paper; a very large book may be summarized in a smaller book.
- A summary should contain all the major points of the original text, and should ignore most of the fine details, examples, illustrations, or explanations.
- The backbone of any summary is formed by crucial details, such as key names, dates, events, words and numbers. A summary must never rely on vague generalities.
- If you quote anything from the original text, even an unusual word or a catchy phrase, you need to put whatever you quote in quotation marks.
- A summary must contain only the ideas of the original text. Do not insert any of your own opinions, interpretations, deductions, or comments into a summary.

3. Reviewing

Reviewing is the final stage in the academic reading process. The other steps you've taken while approaching a text - previewing, active reading, and summarizing - put the content into your head. Reviewing helps seal it in place, and makes sure it stays accessible when you need the information later.

You can use a variety of strategies to review:

- Quiz yourself using your questions.
- Expand a chapter map you made while previewing or actively reading.
- Create vocabulary cards.
- Recall the information in writing or out loud.

As you review, monitor your learning:

- What do you know well?
- What still needs reinforcement?



Reviewing

A reading strategy that involves using study skills to retain new information learned from a text.

3a. How to Review

The following example shows what it looks like to review a text, using the summary notes the imaginary reader took in previous reading steps.

In the days after I finish reading the chapter, I need to actively review the information and start to learn it well. Since I used the two-column note-taking method while I was reading, I decide to quiz myself by covering the right side of my note page and asking myself the questions on the left. If possible, I recite my response aloud or write the answer on a scrap of paper. Then I check my answer against my notes. If I recall the answer correctly, I give myself a checkmark (✓); if I'm incorrect, I give myself an X (✗).

Question	Answer
What is a mistake in contract law?	Legal definition: a circumstance where parties to a contract have entered an agreement that doesn't reflect the parties' actual intentions. ✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurs if parties have a false idea about an important element or didn't agree about a key term of the contract. ✗
What is an example of a mistake?	If seller offers to sell car to buyer at a certain price but then recognizes the car was underpriced after the sale was complete, the court would not nullify the agreement based on mistake. ✗ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seller cannot prove to the court a state of mind when offer was made. ✗ Exception: If conditions are clearly out of line, the court may rule in favor of seller unless there was negligence on seller's part. ✗

I work through the remainder of my notes in the same way. I repeat this process over several study sessions since I know I won't have mastered the material after looking at it only once or twice! After a number of review periods, I am able to clearly see which areas I know and which I still need to work on.

Question	Answer
What is a mistake in contract law?	Legal definition: a circumstance where parties to a contract have entered an agreement that doesn't reflect the parties' actual intentions. ✓✓✓✓ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurs if parties have a false idea about an important element or didn't agree about a key term of the contract. ✗ ✗ ✓✓

What is an example of a mistake?	<p>If seller offers to sell car to buyer at a certain price but then recognizes the car was underpriced after the sale was complete, the court would not nullify the agreement based on mistake. ✕ ✓ ✓ ✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seller cannot prove to the court a state of mind when offer was made. ✕ ✓ ✓ ✓ • Exception: If conditions are clearly out of line, the court may rule in favor of seller unless there was negligence on seller's part. ✕ ✕ ✓ ✓
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For variety in my study periods, I might also use my chapter map to test my recall of ideas. I might focus on one major topic and try to recall the sub-points and details related to that topic. Alternatively, I might put a section of the map onto another page and expand the details there. I can also create vocabulary cards for specific terminology that I need to know. I can easily carry a bundle of these cards with me and review them when I have a few spare minutes.

Front of Notecard	Back of Notecard
Mistake (in contract law)	<p>Definition: A circumstance where parties to a contract have entered an agreement that doesn't reflect the parties' actual intentions.</p> <p>Example: If seller offers to sell car to buyer at a certain price but then recognizes the car was underpriced after the sale was complete, the court would not nullify the agreement based on mistake.</p>

Practicing the different review methods in this example will help you to thoroughly understand and learn your course material. Regular review will also help you monitor your learning, allowing you to identify what you know well and what you need to spend more time on.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that there are three strategies you can use to enhance your active reading practice. **Previewing** involves recalling prior knowledge and setting a purpose for reading; **summarizing** involves recapping what you've read in your own words; **reviewing** involves reinforcing what you've read to remember it going forward. You also learned **how to preview, summarize, and review** by examining various methods and processes for each of these strategies.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: This content has been adapted from Lumen Learning's "Previewing," "Summarizing," and "Reviewing" tutorials.



TERMS TO KNOW

Previewing

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Reviewing

A reading strategy that involves using study skills to retain new information learned from a text.

Summarizing

A reading strategy that involves condensing someone else's ideas and putting them in your own words.