

UNLOCKING COMPREHENSION: PREVIEWING STRATEGY FOR EFFECTIVE READING

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is a crucial skill that supports academic success and lifelong learning. However, many students struggle to understand and retain what they read. One effective method to enhance comprehension is the previewing strategy, which encourages readers to engage with the text before reading it in detail. This article explores the role and objective of previewing in effective reading, examines its benefits, and provides practical methods for implementation in the classroom.

Keywords: Comprehension, skimming, scanning, reading strategy, transition word, previewing, first and last paragraphs, heading and subheadings.

Introduction

Comprehension is the ability to understand, interpret, and make meaning of written texts. It is a complex process that calls on readers to draw conclusions, recognize key ideas, and relate new material to what they already know.

For a variety of reasons, people read different types of texts, such as academic papers, textbooks, and reviews. Reading can be done for some reasons, including:

- to scan for particular information
- to skim to get a main idea of the text
- to relate new content to existing knowledge
- to write something (often depends on a prompt)
- to criticize an argument
- to learn something
- for general comprehension

Strategies

Despite its significance, many students have trouble understanding texts because they lack the skills necessary to interact with them. In the same way, studies show that reading comprehensibility is directly dependent on the strategies that readers use.

Strategies vary from reader to reader. The same reader may employ different tactics for different situations since the aim of reading changes. To improve students' reading comprehension, teachers should consider students' skill level, group, dynamic, age, gender,



cultural background, as well as the sort of text they are dealing with, while determining the method to adopt. They must be able to help students interact deeply and adaptably with all aspects of a text.

A reader is often required to ask himself “why am I reading?” and “what am I reading?” when deciding which strategies to try. The key comprehension strategies are described below.

Before reading

- setting purpose for reading
- speculating the author’s purpose for writing
- reviewing background knowledge and the topic will be learnt
- previewing the text to get an overview of its structure, looking at headings, figures, tables, glossary, etc.
- predicting the contents of the text and pose questions about it. If the authors have provided discussion questions, writing them on a note-taking sheet helps students focus on the meaning of text.

While reading

- annotating and marking sections of the text provides learners easily remember key concepts or interesting ideas
- checking predictions and finding answers to posed questions
- using headings and transition words to identify relationships in the text
- creating a vocabulary list of other unknown words to define later

After reading

- using an outline, thought map to summarize the text in one's own words
- discussion the author's views with someone to check comprehension
- rereading and determining which passages in the text are challenging
- identifying unfamiliar words and practicing to use them

Accomplishing reading assignments is one of the biggest challenges in academia. However, are you managing your reading efficiently? Examine this cooking analogy, highlighting the variations in process. Imagine you need to prepare dinner, but your approach determines how effectively and quickly you can get the meal ready:

The Wanderer (Inefficient Approach) You decide to cook but don’t have a clear plan. You wander through the grocery store, browsing aimlessly through all the aisles, unsure of what to make. After spotting some chicken, you decide to cook a stir-fry. However, you didn’t bring a recipe, so you repeatedly check your phone to see what ingredients you might need. You end up buying extra items you don’t need and forget others. Back home, you start cooking but realize you’re missing essential spices, so you head back to the store again. Dinner is finally ready, but the process took forever and felt chaotic.

The Planner (Efficient Approach) You know you need a nutritious and balanced meal because you want to stay healthy and energized for the week. You decide on stir-fry because it’s quick and fits your goals. Before heading to the store, you look up a recipe and write a list



of ingredients you need. At the store, you head straight to the relevant sections, quickly picking out the items on your list. Back home, you follow the recipe and cook dinner efficiently, leaving you with extra time to relax and enjoy your meal. The key difference between the two scenarios lies in preparation and clarity of purpose. Like Taylor in the first analogy, the **Planner** made decisions based on their goals, which streamlined the entire process. Similarly, when reading:

1. **Set a Purpose:** Know why you're reading (e.g., to learn key concepts, prepare for a test, or find specific information).
2. **Plan Your Approach:** Choose a strategy that aligns with your goal (e.g., skimming, scanning, or deep reading).

By assisting readers in anticipating the topic of the text and preparing for successful interaction, the previewing technique acts as a link between the reader and the content. Previewing a text means that you get an idea what is about without reading the main body of the text. This pre-reading technique aims to help students -gain as much knowledge as possible about the text in a brief amount of time; -consider their prior knowledge of the subject matter of the text; -using the text's features (titles, subtitles, graphs, pictures, terms in bold print, etc.), make predictions about what the text would say about the subject. Previewing involves examining the text *before* reading to gain a general understanding of its structure and content. It can be also used before and during reading a text. This strategy encourages readers to activate their prior knowledge, make predictions, and set a purpose for reading. For educators and students alike, it has been demonstrated that previewing is highly beneficial for enhancing reading results, particularly when it comes to academic and informational texts.

This article will outline the theoretical basis of previewing, explore its key benefits, and provide a range of techniques that can be applied in educational settings. Understanding how to implement previewing effectively can empower readers to unlock deeper comprehension.

Practical Techniques for Implementing Previewing

Educators and readers can adopt various techniques to implement the previewing strategy effectively. These methods can be applied to different types of texts, from short passages to lengthy academic articles.

Skimming and Scanning. Skimming means **reading quickly** to get a general idea of what the text is about. We read only parts of the text, mainly focusing on the most important words and sections. **Scanning** requires looking for specific keywords, numbers, or concepts that stand out.

What is the difference between skimming and previewing? When we skim, we swiftly move our eyes over a large section of the text. Skimming differs from previewing in that it is done within the paragraph text, which is the real body of the content you are reading. Skimming allows us to get some of the key principles without paying attention to the details. For example, when previewing a science article, students might skim the headings (e.g., “Introduction,” “Results,” and “Conclusion”) to understand its structure before diving into the details.



Examining Visual Aids. Graphs, charts, pictures, and captions often provide critical information about the text’s content. Previewing these elements helps readers predict what the text will discuss and prepare for key concepts.

Reading the First and Last Paragraphs Academic texts often summarize their main points in the introduction and conclusion. By previewing these sections, readers gain insight into the author’s purpose, arguments, and key takeaways.

Generating Questions Encourage readers to turn headings or titles into questions. For example, a heading like “*Causes of Climate Change*” could prompt the question: “*What are the main causes of climate change?*” Readers can then look for answers as they read.

Annotating Key Elements During the previewing process, readers can underline headings, highlight keywords, or take notes on what they expect to learn. These annotations serve as a guide for focused reading.

Predicting Content Based on the preview, readers can predict what the text will discuss. Predictions help set a purpose for reading and encourage readers to confirm or revise their understanding as they progress.

An ultimate goal of both teachers and students is to determine what the best previewing method is worthy achieve the comprehension. **What are some previewing reading strategy examples?** There are three primary previewing strategies you should know about and apply in your reading sessions.

KWL+

- K stands for “what I Know”
- W stands for “what I Want to know”
- L stands for “what I Learned”
- + stands for “what I still want to know”

One way to implement this method is to make a table and put the four letters of the KWL+ acronym in separate columns. A reader should make note of what you were able to learn from the session both during and after the preview. Were there things you were hoping to learn, things you knew, things you learned, and things you still need to learn? The KWL+ previewing strategy is extremely helpful and assists you objectively describe what your goals were and what you managed to achieve by previewing a reading material.

The four “P” s

Purpose. Before you start previewing and reading, decide what you want to accomplish.

Preview. Look at the title, images, and other information that is readily available throughout the text. (First and last paragraphs, headings and subheadings, italics, bold type, first and last sentences in body paragraphs)

Prior Knowledge. Analyze your prior knowledge of the issue to establish the necessary level of depth to fulfill your goals while reading the book or material.

Predict. Try to figure out what the author is going to present in the book you are about to read. Does it fulfill your expectations? Is this the book you should read to gain a better understanding of the topic or concepts you want to learn about?

SQ3R

The SQ3R approach is a note-taking reading comprehension strategy. It is effective because it encourages pupils to condense complex materials into easily understandable information.



The SQ3R reading approach consists of five steps, as indicated by the abbreviation. It stands for **Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review**. In the first step, readers determine broadly what the text is about. In the question step readers randomly write down a couple of questions the text will answer. The Read step encourages readers to closely read, while the Recite step readers must recall the key points by summarizing them. The last step insists to assess how well readers remembered.

Previewing in the Classroom

Teachers play a critical role in introducing and reinforcing the previewing strategy. The following steps can help educators integrate previewing into classroom activities:

Modeling the Strategy: Teachers can demonstrate how to preview a text by thinking aloud. For example: *“I see this text has three sections, and there are bolded words like ‘photosynthesis’ and ‘chlorophyll,’ so I think this is about how plants make food.”*

Guided Practice: Provide students with texts and guide them through the previewing process. Ask questions like, *“What do you notice in the headings? What do you think this text is about?”*

Independent Application: Once students are familiar with the strategy, they can practice previewing texts on their own and share their predictions.

Reflecting on the Process: After reading, ask students to reflect on how previewing helped them understand the text. Discuss whether their predictions were accurate.

Conclusion

To sum up, the previewing strategy is a powerful tool for unlocking reading comprehension. By activating prior knowledge, setting reading purposes, and familiarizing readers with the structure of a text, previewing enhances understanding, focus, and retention. For students struggling with academic and informational texts, previewing serves as a bridge to deeper engagement and learning. Educators can empower students to become active, strategic readers by teaching and reinforcing previewing techniques in the classroom. With consistent practice, learners will develop the skills needed to approach complex texts with confidence and unlock their full reading potential.

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