How to Preview a Text

What is Previewing?

Examining the **content** and **organization** of a **text** in order to become familiar with it before reading.
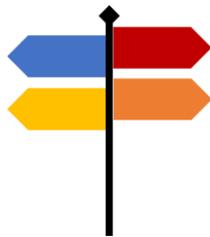
Why should I preview before I read?

Previewing is an excellent way to **save time** and **improve your understanding** of a text.

When you preview, you look for sign-posts by doing the following things:

- Scan for titles, headings, and subheadings
- Skim the first paragraph or introduction
- Skim the last paragraph or summary
- Scan the first sentence after each heading
- Skim the abstract (if provided)
- Make a note of graphic aids such as figures, tables, charts, graphs, and images
- Make a note of typographical aids such as bold-faced or highlighted words and phrases
- Scan any supplemental material at the beginning or end of the text, such as chapter outlines, chapter objectives, discussion questions, or vocabulary lists

Advantages of Previewing:

1. First, it helps you evaluate a text in order to decide if it is relevant for your purposes. This requires you to think about what your purpose is before you read. For instance, if you're doing research on a topic, previewing can help you evaluate if a text provides information you need.

2. Second, it helps you read faster by identifying passages that you must read carefully versus those that you can skim or skip. Generally, you want to slow down and read more carefully when a passage covers a new topic you know very little about; contains complicated or technical material; is filled with essential visual aids like tables, charts, graphs, and images; contains a lot of new or difficult vocabulary; or requires a lot of visualization or interpretation. On the other hand, you may want to skim or skip material when a passage is easy to read, covers material you already know well, or covers material that isn't relevant to your purpose for reading.

3. Finally, it helps you read better by helping you identify questions you may have about the text.