WHAT IS PREREADING, AND WHAT IS THIS BACKGROUND INFORMATION YOU TALK ABOUT?

Prereading is an organized strategy of previewing an assigned reading before you begin reading. Prereading offers you a specific set of items to read over that typically provide you the main ideas presented in the article or textbook chapter you are about to read.

This is where background information comes in. By identifying the main ideas you are about to read, you can trigger what you already know about the subject, which will help you in understanding and remembering when you are reading the assignment.

Because prereading can provide you with the main ideas of the article or textbook chapter, prereading alone can provide you a better understanding of a class lecture by providing exposure (background) to the main ideas that will be presented.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

In addition to activating your background knowledge of the subject being discussed, prereading provides the groundwork for your reading by identifying the:

- main ideas
- organization of ideas
- relationship of vocabulary to the main ideas

What prereading doesn’t provide is:

- details and examples tied to the main ideas and vocabulary
- the level of understanding necessary to fully comprehend the material

7 STEPS OF PREREADING

Each of the seven steps listed below provides specific information. Not all articles or textbook chapters will have each of these features. The absence of certain features will determine the effectiveness of prereading.

1. **Read the title and subtitle.** The title provides the overall topic of the article or chapter, while the subtitle may provide additional focus for the overall topic.

2. **Read the introduction or first paragraph.** The introduction (or first paragraph if there is no introduction) should introduce the main ideas to be discussed.

3. **Read each major heading and subheading.** The headings and subheadings provide you with both main ideas and an organization of how those main ideas fit together under the overall topic. Your brain appreciates this organization, helping you remember this information by seeing the big picture.

4. **Read the first sentence under each heading.** The first sentence can provide you with a brief introduction to that specific main idea.

5. **Read any typographical and graphical aids.** Typographical aids are bold or italicized text, bulleted lists or information in the margins. These often identify your vocabulary. Graphical aids such as tables and charts are often visual summaries of sections of material. Be sure to read the captions below all graphical aids.

6. **Read the last paragraph or summary.** The summary (or last paragraph if there is no summary) should restate the main ideas and may indicate some level of importance.

7. **Read quickly any end-of-article or end-of-chapter material.** This may include study questions, vocabulary lists, and online resources available for the chapter. Study questions may direct your reading, while online resources may provide exercises or quizzes to test your understanding of the material.