



**Hi graduate friends,**

Reading is such a huge part of what you have to do that if you don't find out how to read efficiently, it can quickly turn into an exhausting chore. So let's talk a bit today about some elements of active reading, more specifically, previewing. I'll start by showing you a paragraph from Bransford (1979). Can you tell what process it's talking about?

The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange items into different groups. Of course, one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities that is the next step; otherwise, you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo things. That is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. In the short run this may not seem important, but complications can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well. At first, the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon, however, it will become just another facet of life. It is difficult to foresee any end to the necessity for this task in the immediate future, but, then, one can never tell. After the procedure is completed, one arranges the materials into different groups again. Then they can be put into their appropriate places. Eventually they will be used once more, and the whole cycle will then have to be repeated. However, that is a part of life. (pp. 134–135)

Did you figure out what the process is, or why one shouldn't "overdo things"? Imagine that it was expected of you to recall this information after going over it once... What a stressful and scary situation! Yet you might be placing yourself in that situation on a daily basis. The paragraph you just read was about doing laundry. Does it all make sense now? Go ahead and read it one more time.

Now imagine how much better you would have understood the paragraph if you knew it was talking about washing clothes before reading it. The same stressful and confusing situation may happen when you jump into reading an article or book chapter without knowing what it's going to talk about. Instead, give yourself a big picture of the topic by previewing the material first. According to McGuire (2015), you can do this by quickly studying things like section headings, bold or italic words, charts, graphs, the first line of paragraphs, etc. Then, based on what you just saw/read, generate a few questions you want to find the answers to in the text. E.g., if you saw a chart showing annual household laundry loads by country, you could potentially ask, how is laundry done differently from one country to another? Or if "Plastics" is written in bold, you could ask "What do plastics have to do with laundry?" Then as you read, your mind looks for those answers, and your focus might increase.

What do you say? Want to give previewing a try for your next reading?  
Best,



Najmeh Keyhani (she/her/hers), PhD, from your [Learning Development & Success](#) team!

**Reference:**

Bransford, J. (1979). *Human cognition: Learning, understanding, and remembering*. Wadsworth Pub. Co.

McGuire, S. Y. (2015). *Teach students how to learn: Strategies you can incorporate into any course to improve student metacognition, study skills, and motivation*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

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