



# INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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## PREVIEW REVIEWS: BRINGING A MOVIE THEATER PRACTICE INTO THE CLASSROOM

Preview Reviews can be used in any class, in any discipline, at any level of any size. They provide an opportunity for students to gauge their level of content knowledge in a non-graded, low-stakes activity that can be used to prime students for active learning. They are similar to the movie theater practice of integrating advertising and trivia as entertainment while audiences wait for the main event.

Preview Reviews mimic this practice by providing topic-specific information in an on-screen presentation in order to enhance the productivity of the time at the beginning of a scheduled class. Many class sessions fall victim to inefficient and poor time management, especially during their first few minutes. Employing a repetitive presentation during this time ensures that the first minutes students spend in the classroom are not idle, but rather are cognitively stimulating and productive. Furthermore, Preview Reviews are priming or transition tools to (re)orient students' attention to course content. They can be employed to review previously covered concepts and link concepts to information that will be covered in class that day.

This technique can be tailored for individual sections of content and presented at the instructor's convenience, or developed successively and accumulated over a semester-long period. Whether instructors choose to individualize the Preview Reviews by chapter or to accumulate and randomize the content, both methods, by mere exposure and repetition, can affect students' encoding and recall. As a non-graded activity, Preview Reviews offer many of the same benefits of pre-class quizzes, without the negative aspects typically associated with them.

### The Activity

*Preparation.* Prior to class, develop a slideshow presentation (e.g., PowerPoint, Keynote) in which course material is inserted into slides. To save time,

create Preview Reviews by utilizing publisher-provided questions typically included with most instructor editions of textbooks. This process saves time and energy.

For instructors unfamiliar with how to use presentation software, Microsoft offers training tutorials for their PowerPoint software online at <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/training>. For instructors who do not own or have the funds available to invest in the PowerPoint program, free presentation software is available at <http://download.openoffice.org/index.html>. Finally, Macintosh users who use Keynote have tutorials available at <http://www.apple.com/iwork/tutorials/#keynote>. In our experience, students need to know, prior to experiencing the Preview Reviews, how the information is to be used and the advantages of attending to the material.

*Implementation.* Begin the presentation 10 to 15 minutes prior to class, as students begin entering the room and taking their seats. This information may take the form of questions (e.g., fill-in-the-blank, listing, multiple-choice, true/false), statements (e.g., interesting facts, quotes, paradoxes), or pictures (e.g., cartoons, diagrams). For true/false questions and lists, first show the question alone, and then reveal the answer on a subsequent slide. For multiple-choice, reveal the question and possible answers with incorrect answers disappearing from the screen after a few seconds. This system allows students the opportunity to narrow their responses to one or two choices, creating anticipation during which students' focus remains on their choice and increases retention of information. Screen shots may be timed and change automatically, or the instructor may click through each screen manually to control the time each screen is open to viewing. The options are endless.

*Debriefing.* When you are ready to initiate instruction, stop the Preview Review and begin debriefing students. If the information in the slideshow was meant to prompt students to the information to be covered in class that day, the debriefing can serve as an introduction, or *preview*, of the material. Instructors may solicit answers from students during class instruction (e.g., lecture,



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discussion) based on the information from the Preview Review. If the slideshow presentation is designed as a *review*, the instructor has the opportunity to identify any content areas in need of more attention by debriefing the students on their performance in answering the questions in the slideshow.

### **Appraisal and Tips for Effective Use**

We receive positive remarks about the Preview Reviews. First, students enjoy having them available, particularly early in the semester when they are not yet familiar with their classmates and want to avoid feeling awkward. Second, students observe that Preview Reviews are an effective motivational tool that discourages tardiness.

We enhance this particular benefit by indicating that some of the questions from the Preview Reviews will be included on future exams. The number of Preview Reviews' questions to be on the exam is not necessarily important to them. Rather, it is the opportunity to be exposed to some of the exam questions that motivates them to come to class on time.

Finally, students express their appreciation for the opportunity to benchmark privately how much information they know in a non-graded, low-stakes situation. Preview Reviews work!

**Nakia Welch**, *Adjunct Professor, Communication Department*

**Alicia Mason**, *Assistant Professor, Communication Department*

For further information, contact Nakia Welch, at Oklahoma City Community College, 7777 South May, Oklahoma City, OK 77159, or Alicia Mason, Pittsburg State University, 213 Grubbs Hall, Pittsburg, KS 66762. Emails: [nakia.welch@email.occc.edu](mailto:nakia.welch@email.occc.edu)  
[amason@pittstate.edu](mailto:amason@pittstate.edu)