



# Teaching Concerns

Newsletter of the Teaching Resource Center for Faculty and Teaching Assistants

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## The Précis: One Reading Comprehension Tool

An Idea from Michael Kubovy, Professor of Psychology

Over the years, Michael Kubovy has used the idea of a précis to help students read carefully and learn from their reading. Here is what he tells his students about how to write a 50% précis, a coherent text that uses as many of the author's words as possible, while reducing the text to 50% of its original length:

When reading a text, you should in general not underline more than 10% of the words, but you should do so in a manner that, if all the chosen words were strung together, the resulting text would need only a few connective words and slight syntactic modifications to capture the sense of the text.

Students find the process invigorating and enlightening, as evidenced by an anonymous feedback message received through ITC Toolkit on 9/14/99 for his Fall 1999 course "Pleasures Of The Mind" (PSYC312): "I tried taking a pencil to some of my textbooks and underlining significant words and phrases to make my own sort of précis instead of just highlighting paragraphs. You were right; it actually makes reviewing the material much easier and less time consuming. Thank you for suggesting it in class!"