

When AI squeezes 20 pages into three lines, what does it throw out? — Summarizing

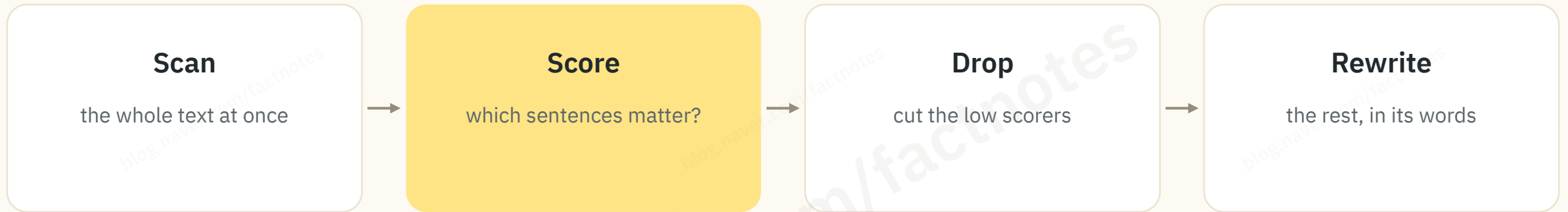
Five-Minute AI Lessons · Sep 27, 2026

Summarizing isn't the skill of shrinking — it's the skill of choosing what to throw out.

In a nutshell

- 1 Summarizing isn't chopping text off from the start. It's **choosing what to keep and what to throw out**, and AI goes through the same steps people do.
- 2 AI scans the whole text in one go, then weighs 'how important is this?' for each sentence. Then it **picks only the high scorers and rewrites them in its own words**.
- 3 That's also why you can predict where summaries go wrong: **words that weren't in the original sneak in**. Always check a summary you get against the original at least once.

The four steps of a summary



The second box is the real summary. Without a standard here, even the sentences that stay will be off.

Key idea: how good a summary is comes down to 'what you throw out'

Put the steps of a summary in order

Shrinking a long text

- 1 Scan the whole text
- 2 Score each sentence
- 3 Drop the less important
- 4 Join the rest in own words

Always look at the whole thing before choosing.
Read only the beginning and shr...

Asking for a good summary

- 1 Give the whole original
- 2 Say who will read it
- 3 Set how many lines
- 4 Check it against original

Set the length and the reader, and there's a
standard for what to drop. A summa...

When a summary goes wrong

- 1 Give only half the text
- 2 Ask to shrink, no rules
- 3 AI fills in the gaps
- 4 Turn it in, still wrong

When the original is missing parts, AI fills the
gaps with believable-sounding...

Tap the mixed-up pieces in order. It's almost the same order you'd go through to shrink the reading for a grade...

Try it yourself in the web lesson · next-token.net/en/learn/day-21/

Just three questions

Q1

What's the first thing AI does when it summarizes?

- ① Scans the whole text once
- ② Cuts sentences from the start
- ③ Reads only the title
- ④ Finds similar texts on the internet

Q2

When you ask for a summary, what changes the result the most?

- ① Writing the request nicely
- ② Saying how many lines and who it's for
- ③ Asking over and over
- ④ Using only short sentences

Q3

What must you do after you get a summary?

- ① Turn it in right away
- ② Measure its length
- ③ Check it against original
- ④ Change the font

Know the why, too

Q1

①

You need to see the whole thing to compare what matters. Read only the beginning and cut, and you miss the conclusion at the end entirely.

Q2

②

Length and reader are your 'standard for what to drop.' Without one, AI decides on its own, and you don't get the summary you wanted.

Q3

③

The last step rewrites things in its own words, so words that weren't in the original can slip in. A summary isn't done until you've checked it.

**Summarizing isn't the skill of shrinking —
it's the skill of choosing what to throw out.**



Tomorrow: Translation — where does swapping word for word split off from carrying the meaning across?