DAY 21 · Part 3 · What It Can Do

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

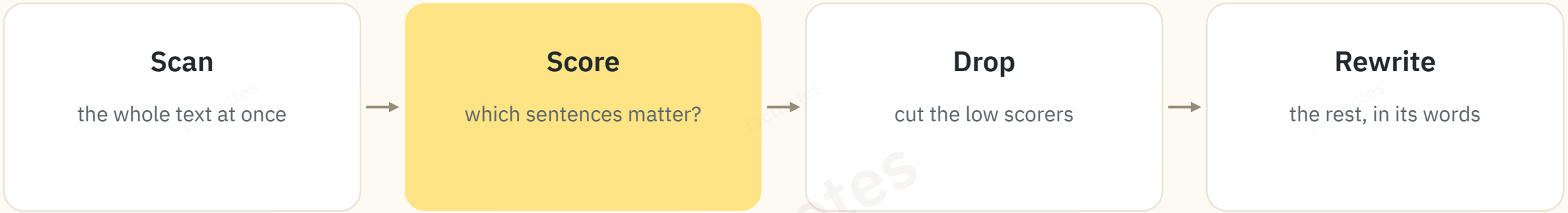
1. Summarizing isn't chopping text off from the start. It's **choosing what to keep and what to throw out**, and AI goes through the same steps people do.

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.

In one picture

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/

Quick check

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?