



Summarizing

To summarize is to put in your own words a shortened version of written or spoken material, which recaptures main points. Summarizing involves analyzing information, distinguishing important from unimportant elements and translating large chunks of information into a few short cohesive sentences stated in your own words. Fiction and nonfiction texts, media, conversations, meetings, and events can all be summarized. These skills enhance student comprehension because they require active reading, listening, and processing. They also lead to long-term mastery of information as students go beyond simply understanding to being able to express that understanding in writing.

Reflections on summarizing skills

1. In what situation is it important to summarize
2. What does summarizing help students accomplish?

Here are some general questions for students to consider when summarizing either fiction or nonfiction:

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- What was the outcome?
- Is the essential piece of information included?
- Are interesting but nonessential facts or details eliminated?
- Would someone who read my summary really understand the main points of the text?

Why is summarizing important

- Summarizing helps students understand the organizational structure of lessons or texts.
- Research shows improving student summarizing skills results in a 34 percentile gain in student performance
- Students who can effectively summarize learn to analyze information, identify key concepts, and define the most crucial information.
- Today's society and business world place a premium on being able to get to the point. Summarizing is just that.

How to Write a Summary

Option A (basic)

1. Look for and understand how information is structured.
2. Students use the delete-substitute-keep process for summarizing. A "rule-based strategy" for summarizing which includes a specific set of steps. The steps are:
 - Delete unnecessary words or sentences
 - Delete redundant words or sentences
 - Substitute super-ordinate terms (for example, "trees" for pines, oaks, and maples)
 - Select or create a topic sentence

Option B

1. Look for and understand how information is structured.
2. Read the material and distinguish the main ideas from the details.
3. List the main ideas in phrase form.
4. Group the main ideas into logical categories—the order in which you read the main ideas is not always the best order for writing a summary.
5. Turn the main ideas into sentences and combine them into a paragraph using transitional words.
 - Include a topic sentence.
6. Proofread a first draft for punctuation, spelling, and unity.
7. Make a final copy with neat handwriting.

Option C

Use two-column notes as a basis for creating a simple summary. The main ideas from a source are listed on the left while the supporting details are written on the right side. The left side with the main ideas serves as a basic outline for a summary to be compiled.

Option D

Work in pairs—one reads aloud—listener gives summary—meet with second pair to improve their summary. This option can be used alone or in conjunction with Option A, B, or C as well.

Using a Variety of Materials

1. Give more complex material to summarize as the skill progresses
2. Summarize different types of information