

Summarizing the Text

Teacher Reference

What is it?

Summarizing the text is a skill that requires competence in both reading and writing. Used as a reading strategy, summarizing the text asks students to first identify information that is essential to understanding the text or passage; once students have differentiated between essential and non-essential information, they move on to the next skill: crafting brief statements that accurately account for what is being discussed or argued.

How do I use it?

Teaching summary is a challenge for both students and teachers alike. For this reason, both students and teachers need a few different ways to approach this strategy. One way to get students identifying essential information in the text is to have them underline one word or phrase that they feel represents what the section is about. Teachers should model for students how to craft brief summaries in the margins, demonstrating for students how competent readers identify and write about essential information. Engaging students in a variety of summary exercises will help them practice and eventually learn this vital skill.

When should I use it?

Start small. Our first instinct is to have our students write summaries for full-length articles, chapters, or units. Assigning this type of reading and writing assignment—before they have learned how to competently write summaries—might cause unnecessary frustration for both the teacher and his or her students. While students are reading, have them summarize a passage or short section of text. Allow students to share what they have written and provide time for revision of their summaries. Summarizing texts is a skill that requires lots of practice and guidance from an experienced reader.

Why should I use it?

There are many purposes for summarizing texts. A reader will summarize a text in order to clarify information, capture the gist of what is being discussed, and or condense lengthier passages into more manageable parts. A reader might also summarize a text in order to check for understanding. In addition to its usefulness as a comprehension strategy, both colleges and universities expect incoming freshman to write competent summaries. As students advance up through secondary education and into college level work, they will be expected to incorporate source material into their papers.

Summarizing Sections of an Argument

One-page Reference Guide

Before you write your summary...

- 1.) Read the selection carefully.
- 2.) Re-read the text and mark information that is relevant to the reading goal.
- 3.) Pause to connect ideas within the text.
- 4.) Go back and chart individual paragraphs in order to gain insight into how the author constructs meaning.
- 5.) Consider the following questions:
 - “What is this paragraph *doing*?”
 - “What is this paragraph about?”
 - “Does the author make a claim in this paragraph or section?”

Consider the following when writing a summary:

- Use an accurate “doing” verb to describe the purpose of the paragraph. For example, when describing what a paragraph is *doing*, use verbs like clarifying, interpreting, introducing, etc.
- Use your own words, except for important content words.
- Be aware of your own biases; avoid inaccurate interpretations or representations.
- Quote or paraphrase claims that are made in the paragraph. If there are no claims present, write down facts or other data used to support the argument.
- Read your paragraph for clarity and accuracy. Someone reading your paragraph should be able to understand the author’s main claims and have a general idea of how the author constructs his/her argument.



Summarizing Sections of an Argument: *Guided Practice*

Title of Work: _____

Author: _____ Type of Text: _____

1. What is this paragraph *doing*? What is this paragraph about?

Ex. *This paragraph is introducing the idea of a civil society...*

2. What does the author claim or assert in this paragraph? If the author does not make a claim, record data, facts or other backing that supports the argument.

Ex. You might say, *Author X argues (states, claims, contends, asserts, reasons, or another verb) that...* or in the absence of a claim, you might say, *This paragraph defines a civil society by...*

3. Seamlessly combine ideas from 1 and 2 into *one* (or *two*) concise summary sentence(s).

Summarizing Sections of an Argument: *Independent Practice*

Title of Work: _____

Author: _____ Type of Text: _____

Paragraph # _____

1. What is this paragraph *doing*? What is this paragraph about?

2. What does the author claim or assert in this paragraph? If the author does not make a claim, record data, facts or other backing that supports the argument.

3. Seamlessly combine ideas from 1 and 2 into *one* (or *two*) concise summary sentence(s).

Summarizing Sections of Informational Texts

One-page Reference Guide

Steps to writing a competent summary:

- 1.) Read the selection carefully.
- 2.) Re-read the text and mark information that is relevant to the reading goal.
- 3.) Pause to connect ideas within the text.
- 4.) Make a list of the most important information in the paragraph or section. Be sure to leave out nonessential descriptions and other supporting details.
- 5.) Try to write one sentence that includes all of the relevant information in the paragraph. If the paragraph is long, you may need to write two sentences.

Consider the following when writing a summary:

- Use your own words, except for important content words.
- Do not include your own ideas or comments, such as “I think...”
- Do not repeat ideas or change the author’s meaning.



When summarizing the whole text...

- 1.) Copy your summary sentences into a paragraph and use transitional language in order to logically create relationships between ideas.
- 2.) Read your paragraph. Check to be sure that you have included enough information so that someone who has not read the selection would understand the main points. Your summary must not be more than one-fourth to one-third the length of the original passage.

Summarizing Sections of Informational Texts: *Independent Practice*

Title of Work: _____

Author: _____ Type of Text: _____

Paragraph # _____

1. What is this paragraph or section about?

2. On the lines below, record essential information from the reading passage that is relevant to your reading purpose.

• _____

• _____

3. Seamlessly combine ideas from 1 and 2 into *one* (or *two*) concise summary sentence(s).

Summarizing Sections of Informational Texts: *Independent Practice*

Title of Work: _____

Author: _____ Type of Text: _____

Template for Paragraph # (____)

1. What is the paragraph or passage about?

2. Record information from the passage that is relevant to the reading goal.

•

•

•

3. Seamlessly combine ideas from 1 and 2 into *two* or *three* summary sentences.

Paraphrasing Texts

One-page Reference Guide

You might want to paraphrase in order to...

- 1.) work through a difficult concept
- 2.) assess if you understand what is being said
- 3.) reduce the amount of quoted material in your paper
- 4.) simplify complex ideas for yourself and your readers

Remember: If the idea is not yours, you must give credit to the original author by stating both the author's name and the text from which you got the idea. When paraphrasing, you must also use a parenthetical reference as a way of acknowledging that the idea is not yours and that it came from a specific text.

Guidelines for writing a *good* paraphrase:

- 1.) Carefully read the passage you intend to use in your paper
- 2.) Define unfamiliar words
- 3.) Clarify complex ideas
- 4.) Replace common words with synonyms
- 5.) Replace unfamiliar or esoteric language with more familiar terms
- 6.) Provide examples to explain difficult concepts
- 7.) Avoid using the same sentence structure as the original
- 8.) Reread the paraphrase to ensure it is accurate

On a separate sheet of paper, construct the following chart to help you paraphrase.

Original Passage	Paraphrase



Message/ Method/ Matter



What is the **message** of the text? (What is the text about?)

What **method(s)** does the author use to get his/her readers to consider his/her argument?

What does it **matter**? (What is significant about this text?)

Rhetorical Précis: Summary of an Argument

In _____
(Include the following: author's first and last name, type of text, title of work)

_____,
_____ argues that _____
(author's last name)

He/ she claims that _____

He/ she supports/ develops this claim by first _____

Then _____

And finally, _____

(author's last name) 's purpose is to _____

in order to _____

This work is significant because _____

One-page Report



Format

- Use standard (8 ½ x 11) unlined paper (for groups, use poster paper)
- Creatively and purposefully fill the page with relevant information
- Written work must be in ink or typed
- Use color when appropriate

Content

- Title of the text (write at the top of the page)
- Author(s) full name (place underneath the title)
- Type of text
- Subject or topic of the text
- Date of publication
- A significant quotation from the text that captures what the author is arguing (provide a parenthetical reference)
- Concise summary of the author's key claims (assertions)
- Key voices the author includes to establish his/ her credibility or construct his/ her argument
- Key terms and an explanation as to how the terms are used in the text
- Two or more illustrations that represent the ideas discussed in the text

Use your best penmanship when creating your One-page Report. Your work needs to be legible and accurate. Organize your one-pager so that it makes sense and incorporate color to add interest.