

What Is Summarizing?

Summarize

Summarizing is how we take larger selections of text and reduce them to their bare essentials: the gist, the key ideas, the main points that are worth noting and remembering. Webster's calls a summary the "general idea in brief form"; it's the distillation, condensation, or reduction of a larger work into its primary notions.

What Are We Doing When We Summarize?

We strip away the extra verbiage and extraneous examples. We focus on the heart of the matter. We try to find the key words and phrases that, when uttered later, still manage to capture the gist of what we've read. We are trying to capture the main ideas and the crucial details necessary for supporting them.

Common Mistakes When Summarizing

- writing down everything
- writing down next to nothing
- writing way too much
- not writing enough
- copying word for word

What Should You Do When Summarizing?

- pull out main ideas
- focus on key details
- use key words and phrases
- break down the larger ideas
- write only enough to convey the gist
- take succinct but complete notes

Learning To Summarize

- Read and underline a selection, turn the sheet over and attempt to create a summary paragraph of what they can remember of the key ideas in the piece. Only look back at their underlining when you reach a point of being stumped.
- Write successively shorter summaries, constantly refining and reducing their written piece until only the most essential and relevant information remains. Keep rewriting until ultimately you arrive at a single sentence.
- Take articles from the newspaper, and cut off their headlines. Practice writing headlines for (or matching the severed headlines to) the "headless" stories.
- **Sum It Up:** Imagine you are placing a classified ad or sending a telegram, where every word used costs money. Each word costs 10 cents, and you can only spend "so much." For instance, if you have \$2.00 to spend, then that means you have to write a summary that has no more than 20 words. You can adjust the amount you have to spend, and therefore the length of the summary, according to the text they are summarizing.

Source: <http://www.readingquest.org/strat/summarize.html>