

Lesson Summarizing Techniques

A summary is a brief statement or account of something. Summarizing is a skill that will be needed for the GED® 2014 test modules. Students may be expected to read a passage and using their own words, write a summary of the main idea. Summarizing is also essential skill that is needed in the workplace and in the community. In some cases, writing a summary is an excellent learning strategy that allows students to monitor their own progress in learning course material.

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.

Summarizing one of the hardest strategies for students to grasp and fully learn, and it is one of the hardest strategies for you to teach. You have to repeatedly model it and give your students plenty of time and opportunities to practice it. There are many different ways students can summarize material from class. Choose a method below that will fit in with the material presented and one that seems to work best with the students in class.

Written / Journal Summary -

Summarization is an essential strategy for reading comprehension. Explain to students that when writing a summary, they need to pick out the most important facts from the reading passage. Describe to them that they need to be able to tell someone who has not read the material the most important parts. Explain that a summary should be as brief or short as possible; therefore, they do not want to get too specific or have too many details in their summary. Remind students that in a summary they should use their own words and they should also be objective, or not use their opinion, in a summary.

Step 1: Explain to students what is a summary. Ask them to tell you areas of their lives when they have been asked to summarize (i.e., to recap a movie they saw, to tell a co-worker what the manager said at a meeting). Explain to learners that the purpose of summarizing is to find the main idea and important details in the reading passage. It is also an important skill they will need for GED 2014®.

Step 2: Model summarizing with a quick oral example – Here is one taken from TV411.com "I will summarize the movie Titanic. The movie was almost three hours long and had many beautiful details, but for a summary I need to be brief. The movie is about a young man and a young woman who met and fell in love on a ship while crossing the Atlantic Ocean. The ship hit an iceberg and sank and many people did not survive including the young man. In the end, the young woman lived to tell the story." The summary of the three-hour movie can be done in three sentences leaving out the details.

Step 3: Explain to students there are three important steps for a summary and that at first, you will work as a group to write a summary of the reading passage. Let students know that as they become more comfortable with writing a summary, they will be expected to do it on their own. Write the underlined statements on the board and explain to the students what they mean. Ask students to write the underlined statements in their notebooks to review later.

1. Keep the most important ideas. Ask the students to tell you the most important ideas from the reading passage and write them on the board.
2. Remove the ideas that are not very important. As students tell you important ideas from the reading passage have the class discuss their importance. Some ideas will not be that important and are not needed in the summary. Point out that those details make the reading passage more interesting, but for the purposes of a summary, they are not needed.
3. Use your own words to write the summary. Explain to students that one way to write a summary with the important ideas is to review some of the "Wh" words. Who or what is the passage about? What did that person or thing? How did s/he or it accomplish it? You can review the example summary from Titanic.
 - Who or what = a young man and a young woman
 - What did they do = they fell in love on a ship crossing the ocean
 - How did she accomplish it = the young woman survived the sinking of the ship to tell the story

Step 4: Circulate the room to check on students' written work. See if they need some help in finding the important ideas or if they are including too many details. If a student is stuck, ask them to tell you orally what the reading passage was about (they can usually do it better orally than in written format). Then, explain how they just have to take the words they just said and put them on paper.

Note: As students gain confidence in summarizing, ask for volunteers to write their examples on the board for others to see. This will provide new and struggling students with various examples of how to summarize a reading passage.

Oral summary -

This summary strategy doesn't take up too much time. It can be used when there is only a few minutes left of class as a way to wrap up a lesson.

Step 1: Pair up students in groups of two (Student A and Student B)

Step 2: Explain to students they will have 4 rounds (2 rounds of 30 seconds each and 2 rounds of 15 seconds each) of oral summary. Describe how each round works

Round 1: Student A orally summarizes the material from today's lesson to Student B. Student B only listens and doesn't ask questions. This goes on for 30 seconds.

Round 2: Students switch and now, Student B orally summarizes today's lesson for 30 seconds to Student A. Student A only listens and doesn't ask questions.

Round 3: Now the students can add information they remembered when listening to their partner and add on to their original summary.

Student A adds information to his/her original summary for 15 seconds. Student B only listens and doesn't ask questions.

Round 4: Student B adds information to his/her original summary for 15 seconds. Student A only listens and doesn't ask questions.

Exit question summary –

Explain to students that you will have them summarize what they have learned in today's lessons with an exit question summary. When students are leaving class, ask each student to tell you one new thing they learned from today's material and how it relates to the lesson. You can do an oral exit question summary or have students write them on an index card which you collect as students leave the classroom.

Example:

Teacher: "What is one thing or the most important thing you learned from today's lesson on Earth and space science?"

Student: "I learned there are only 8 planets and I always thought there were 9."

Note: A variation of the activity is to ask students "What is the biggest question they have from today's lesson?" Students can write their biggest question on an index card or they can tell it to you as they leave. This may help you plan for the review of the material presented in class. It is also a way to see what questions students still have about the material presented.