

Writing to Learn

Explanation of Reading Strategy

The Four Step Summary

This strategy involves creating a summary of text consisting of four sentences. Students practice reducing text into the most important information. Students write to learn, record important data, and apply what they learned. The key to this cognitive-organizing process is the four step formula (Stanfill and Silver, 1978).

The Four Step Summary

1. Identify the topic to be summarized.
2. Tell how the passage begins.
3. Tell what is covered in the middle (main idea and two supporting details).
4. Tell how the passage ends.

Before Reading

Introduce and preview the text to be read. The teacher gives students the Four Step Summary and discuss the steps in the strategy.

During Reading

The selection is read individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Students read, keeping in mind the formula used to summarize when finished.

After Reading

After reading, the teacher models the strategy, putting information on the graphic organizer according to the four steps. Use transitions and verbs to connect information. Complete the summary in four sentences, one from each category.

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Model of Reading Strategy

The Four Step Summary

Steps in Writing a Summary Formula

What are you summarizing?	What does it begin with?	What is in the middle?	How does it end?
Civil Rights Movement	1955 Rosa Parks refused to give her seat on a city bus to a white man.	Laws barred whites and blacks from attending the same schools. Martin Luther King, Jr. believed in nonviolent protest and organized the Montgomery Bus Boycott which lasted one year. 1960 four African American college students sat at the "whites only" counter at Woolworths in Greensboro, NC 1961 nonviolent Freedom Riders 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr led segregation march on Birmingham, AL 1963 Washington, DC speech by Martin Luther King, Jr "I have a dream..."	1954 Supreme Court outlawed school segregation by race. 1956 Supreme Court ruled it illegal to have separate seats for African Americans and whites. Within six months, stores agreed to serve food to African American customers. U. S. government ordered an end to whites-only sections in airports, bus and train terminals. 1964 Congress passed the Civil Rights Act.

Final summary:

The Civil Rights Movement began in the early 1950s through mid-1960s with protests over segregation laws regarding schools, busses, lunch counters, restrooms and separate waiting areas in airports, bus and train stations ending with the 1964 Congressional Civil Rights Act.

Fill in the above columns with information from your reading. As you fill in the columns, remember to delete trivial material, delete repetitive material and provide a term that labels or categorizes a list of items or actions.

Once you have filled in the columns, write a summary sentence using the information for each column. After writing your summary, ask yourself the following questions.

Is anything important left out?

Is the information in the right order?

Have I selected the most important information?

Finally, consider your style of writing. Read each sentence aloud to be sure it reads smoothly: Does it flow easily?

Can you change words to smooth it out? Have you used unnecessary words?

Once you have completed all these steps, you probably have written a good Four - Step Summary.

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Template of Reading Strategy

The Four Step Summary

What are you summarizing?	What does it begin with?	What is in the middle?	How does it end?
Summary Sentence:	Summary Sentence:	Summary Sentence: (words and phrases such as covers, discusses, presents, and develops the idea that, are useful here)	Summary Sentence: (include "ends with")

Final Summary
