

Literacy and Numeracy for NCEA Level 1 - Reading

Summarising

Content

This resource supports the teaching and learning of comprehension strategies that can be used in conjunction with Unit Standard 26624: Read texts with understanding. 'Reading with understanding' assumes learners are *active* meaning makers, not passive consumers of text. This means that learners must be able to use *strategies* to facilitate meaning making and that they have a range of strategies they can employ when meaning breaks down. This resource is part of a set of resources which include teaching and learning sequences designed to develop learners' ability to apply a strategy. The sequence is suitable for learners in any context which requires reading texts.

Alignment

The content aligns with step 4/5 of the Comprehension progression.

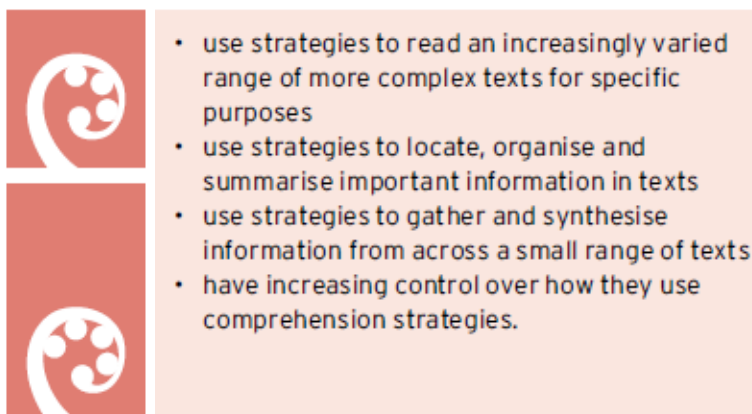


Fig 1. Step 4/5 of the Comprehension progression

Intent

The intent of this resource is to develop a learner's ability to apply the comprehension strategy of summarising.

After completing the teaching and learning sequence learners will be better able to:

- recognise why summarising is useful and how a summary is constructed
- summarise paragraphs into single sentences
- identify the features of a good summary
- summarise a whole text

Sequence

There are four parts to this sequence. Learners will:

1. discuss the features of a good summary
2. summarise a paragraph into a sentence
3. match summary sentences with paragraphs
4. develop a summary of the whole text.

Summarising

Summarising is a powerful strategy. It allows the reader to condense ideas and information into bite-sized chunks that can be easily remembered. Readers who *actively* summarise as they read, are able to recall more of what they read, and make better meaning from what they read.

Despite the benefits of summarising many people are unsure of what a summary is. Below are some ideas from researchers.

Extracting the main points and repeating them in your own words.

(Brown & Day, 1983)¹

Connect[ing] major themes into concise statements that capture the purpose of a reading for the reader.

(Block & Pressley, 2003)²

¹ Brown, A.L., & Day, J.D. (1983). Macrorules for summarizing texts: The development of expertise. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 22, 1-14.

² Block, C., & Pressley, M. (2003). Best practices in comprehension instruction. In L.M. Morrow, L.B. Gambrell, & M. Pressley (Eds.), *Best practices in literacy instruction* (2nd ed., pp. 111-126). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

A good summary *links* the main points of a text into a concise, coherent whole.

When summarising (written or verbal), the following guidelines may be useful:

- delete unnecessary material (redundancies)
- generalise – use superordinate terms where appropriate
 - for example, *cats, dogs, fish, guinea pigs* could become *pets*
- integration – instead of repeating a list of instructions, include only the task, where appropriate
 - for example, for instructions on how to save a computer file all the steps (e.g., *File, Save as, Enter document name, Click save icon*) may not need to be included. In the summary simply *Save file* may be sufficient.
- select paragraph topic sentences and paraphrase if needed
- if no topic sentence exists, invent your own!

1. Discuss the features of a good summary

Step one: Discuss with learners what a summary is and why it is useful. Useful discussion points are:

- summarising while reading improves memorisation and subsequent recall of information.
- summarising improves the understanding of text.
- summarising is natural. People summarise constantly without being aware of it. For example, have you ever told a friend about a movie you saw, or a book you read, or a sporting event? It is likely that your description was a summary.

Step two: Show learners the definitions of a summary and the guidelines. Work through the points discussing each part. Also note that a bad summary is better than no summary. Learners should focus on making this a part of their practice. The skill of summarising takes time to develop.

2. Summarise a paragraph into a sentence

Step one: Hand out a text to learners of at least five or more paragraphs.

Step two: Have learners break into groups. Randomly assign each group one paragraph from the text. It does not matter if two groups are assigned the same paragraph. Groups are not to know which paragraphs other groups have.

Step three: Instruct each group to read and summarise their paragraph into one sentence. Once each group has written a sentence, ask the groups to refine it, if needed. For example:

Is there any way you could shorten your sentence, while keeping the same meaning?

3. Match summary sentences with paragraphs

Step one: Each group nominates a group member to write their summary sentence on the whiteboard so the whole class can read it.

Step two: Once all the summary sentences are on the board, the groups determine which of the sentences summarise which paragraphs. During this time, the groups will have to read each sentence on the board and each of the paragraphs to determine which is the best fit. This is a useful method of getting learners to read a complex text.

Step three: Once the groups have decided which sentence summarises each paragraph, work through each of the sentences as a whole class. Ask each group to state which paragraph they believe the sentence summarises and why. Once all the groups have made their guess, ask each group to tell the class which paragraph they summarised.

Tip 1: Scoring this activity can boost engagement.

Tip 2: The best learning in this activity occurs during this discussion stage. As learners explain *why* they thought a particular sentence summarised a paragraphs, they will be making connections between aspects of the sentence and the paragraph. Allow learners to discuss, argue, and make their points, before giving them the answers.

Tip 3: Encourage the groups to refine their sentence during the discussion phase. Refer back to the summarising guidelines.

4. Develop a summary of the whole text

You will now have several sentences on the whiteboard, each of which summarises a paragraph from the text. If a paragraph has not been summarised, this is a good opportunity to demonstrate a good summary sentence to the learners. Write your own, and ask the class if it could be improved. The learners will have to read the paragraph to give you their feedback.

Step one: Ask the groups to re-read the sentences on the whiteboard and to write one final summary that summarises all of them. This summary may be two or three sentences long and would ideally maintain the important information while leaving out any superfluous details.

Tip: Throughout this entire process continue to remind learners of the guidelines, and use these to evaluate the summaries.

Step two: Ask each group to write their summaries on the whiteboard. Have a vote between groups as to which they think is the better summary. Ask them to explain why they selected a certain summary and what might have been done to improve the others.

Final point: Although this activity may seem to take time, it sets the foundation for continued use of summarising, which will help your learners consolidate this useful comprehension strategy.