

Summarizing Key Information

It is essential, as readers begin to tackle longer texts for research, that they can differentiate between important information and information that is not so vital to include when summarizing ideas.

Time: 20 minutes

- Materials:**
- familiar non-fiction text, e.g., “Threats to Nature” in *Explore! Magazine: Nature Up Close* from the *Nature Watch* unit
 - chart paper strips
 - chart paper and markers

Grouping: whole class and small groups

Procedure:

Teaching Tip: Students will need extensive modelling and guided practice on this skill before they should be expected to do it extensively on their own.

1. Prior to the lesson, write out five important and five less-important details from a familiar text.
2. Create a two-column chart with the words “Yes” and “No” on it.
3. Explain to students that they will be learning to summarize the key information in a text because, as they research, they will need to know what information is important to remember and what details can be left out.

When we gather information during our inquiry, we'll need to make notes about the information that is important to remember. We'll need to summarize the information and leave out details that are not necessary. We're researching the question “What can we do to protect nature?” so let's look at some of the important details in “Threats to Nature.”
4. Show students one of the strips of paper with an important detail on it. Place it in the “Yes” column of the chart. Show two more strips of paper with important details on them. Place them in the “Yes” column.

There are a lot of details in the article “Threats to Nature,” but I want to pick the most important information for my summary. I think the fact that we do many things to harm nature is important because it tells us some of the things that we should try to stop doing in order to protect nature.
5. Now show students one of the strips of paper with a less-important detail on it. Place it in the “No” column.

The fact that we need nature to survive is true but it doesn't give any information to help to answer the question about what we can do to protect nature.

6. Repeat this same activity with two more strips of less-important details, placing them in the “No” column.
7. Give students a few minutes to discuss with a partner why they think you put certain information in each column.
8. Show students another four strips (two containing important details and two containing less-important details) and have them predict in which column they each should go. Encourage students to provide a rationale for why a particular strip was placed in a particular column.
9. Once all of the strips have been placed in a column, discuss the sorting rule that was used for each column.
10. Look at each of the strips in the “Yes” column and highlight or underline the key or important information found on each strip.
11. On a subsequent day, you might consider looking at another familiar text and work with students to highlight the key information.

Turn to a partner and talk about why we put certain information in the “Yes” column and some in the “No” column. Think about why the information in the “Yes” column is important.

Teaching Tip: If students are researching in small groups, pairs, or individually, ask them to go over their notes from the materials they used in their research and summarize the key information.