

First Grade Summary Writing Instruction and Practice

Summary Writing Instruction and Practice

Directions:

- You and your child will read the entire paragraph aloud together.
- Next, read the first sentence of the paragraph to your child.
- Have your child dictate three words to you from the first sentence that will help him/her remember that sentence.
- You draw the graphic organizer on the blackboard and write the three words from the first sentence next to Roman numeral I. Separate the words with commas. Capitalize only those words that are capitalized in the sentence.
- Have your child copy what you have written onto his graphic organizer, making sure to put commas between each word.
- You read the second sentence in the paragraph. Have your child dictate three words from that sentence that will help him/her remember that sentence.
- You write the three words, separated by commas, on the line next to 1.
- Have your child copy what you have written onto his graphic organizer, making sure to put commas between each word.
- Continue this process of choosing three words for each sentence in the paragraph.
- When all of the words have been listed for each sentence in the paragraph, have your child put the original paragraph aside (turn it over).
- Now have your child retell the paragraph to you, referring only to his graphic organizer showing three key words for each sentence. Encourage the child to “peek” at the original *only* if necessary.

Directions (continued):

- The child should be encouraged to retell the paragraph in his/her own words. The goal is **not** for the child to retell the paragraph exactly as it is written, but to use the key word outline as a tool for the child to retell the main ideas of the paragraph in his/her own words. **Do not skip the retell part of this assignment.** It is necessary they hear themselves.

Writing Assignment:

- Upon completion of the retell, the child should refer to his/her key word outline to re-write the paragraph in his/her own words. The child should attempt to do this part of the exercise using only their key word outline, while referring to the original as little as possible or not at all. “Peeks” should not be encouraged, but be more generous with your child when first attempting to do this type of summarizing.
- Plan to summarize a 5-6 sentence paragraph using the key word outline technique about once a week to gain mastery of this skill. Grade level paragraphs can be easily obtained from your child’s school books. By using paragraphs from history and science, you can teach content while doing writing. Paragraphs can also be obtained for free from textbook publisher’s websites. See “Resources” that follow.

NOTE:

- Writing from a key word outline when first beginning is not as easy as it looks. It is recommended that you do a paragraph yourself prior to teaching one to understand what the task involves. Your child will improve at summarizing paragraphs from key word outlines with practice, so be patient.
- You want to make the writing experience a pleasant one, so use good judgment on allowing “peeks” at the original during retelling and writing.
- The key word outline technique is a very powerful tool that helps bridge the “I don’t know what to write about” gap in beginning writers when there are little life experiences to draw from. It is also a powerful tool that helps writers organize their thoughts while causing them to draw on their internalized language structure.
- You can help your child if he/she is having a difficult time using correct sentence structure by having your child read books out loud to you rather than having them do silent reading. The structure of language is best learned when “heard” word by word in correct order. If your child is not yet reading, use books on tape, and/or read out loud to your child daily.

RESOURCES for Beginning Summary Writing:

- For much more thorough training in the use of key word outlines for **beginning summary writing**, go to the Institute for Excellence in Writing website, www.writing-edu.com, or phone them at 1-800-856-5815. The 9 DVD parent writing training set is called, *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style (with the seminar workbook)*. Also, to see this method taught to a group of students, purchase the *Student Writing Intensive, Level A (grades 4-5)*. Older students should purchase *Level B (grades 6-7)*, or *Level C (grades 8-10)*.
- Houghton Mifflin Company, www.eduplace.com, then click on your state/subject/grade to find resources for paragraphs for summary writing. Paragraphs from biographies, source documents and Weekly Reader for California history can be gotten at, www.eduplace.com/kids/socsci/ca/.

Columbus

Christopher Columbus lived a long time ago. He wanted to get to Asia by sailing across the Atlantic Ocean. Columbus and his crew sailed on three ships. The trip was long and hard. At last they saw land! It was an island that he named San Salvador.

NOTE: The paragraphs to summarize should be at or below the child's reading level. If you find the paragraph is too difficult for your child, simply find a paragraph from a lower reading level. The intent is to allow your child to practice summarizing information, while hopefully discovering that writing can be a pleasurable experience. Difficult words are often chosen as one of the three key outline words and will be copied from the source text onto the outline, and from the outline to the final paragraph. So don't be afraid to use paragraphs with words that your child cannot spell. Copying the spelling of the key words from the source paragraph onto the key word outline and to the final paragraph is a good skill to develop and should be encouraged.

KEY WORD OUTLINE

Columbus

- I. _____
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

NOTE: The Roman numeral I simply denotes that this is the first sentence in the paragraph. This organizer is not attempting to imitate traditional outlining. Parents who wish, may make their own organizer consistent with traditional outlining. The goal here is not to teach outlining, but to create a tool for summary writing. Young children are not usually confused by this outline and easily convert to traditional outlining later.

KEY WORD OUTLINE

Columbus Outline Example

- I. Christopher Columbus, lived, ago
1. Asia, across, Atlantic Ocean
2. Columbus, crew, sailed
3. trip, long, hard
4. last, saw, land
5. island, named, San Salvador

NOTE: Some children will choose nouns, others verbs, or adjectives. Any combination of word types is OK. Don't correct their choice of words or make them feel there is a "right" choice of words. Stay to three words only for now. With more than three words, they will be re-writing almost exactly the original paragraph. The purpose of the three words is to give them enough information so they have something to write from, but to limit the information enough so they must draw on their own sense of language structure.

PARAGRAPH WRITTEN FROM OUTLINE

Student Example

Christopher Columbus lived some time ago. He thought he could sail to Asia by going across the Atlantic Ocean. Columbus and his crew sailed until they saw land. The trip was long and hard. As last Columbus saw land which was an island. He named it San Salvador.

NOTE: Students should be encouraged to put the information into their own words. They should also be encouraged to combine information from two or more sentences.

First Grade Summary Writing More Instruction and Practice

Preparation Practice #2

Columbus looked around. He saw plants and animals and the people who lived there. They were called the Taino. Later, Columbus went to other places around the Caribbean Sea. Then he went back to Spain. Columbus told the people in Spain about all of the people and places he had seen.

Preparation Practice #3

Long ago, schools looked very different from the way they do today. They used to be much smaller. Schools had one room where children of all ages learned together. On the Plains, there were not enough trees to make schools out of wood. Many schools were made out of heavy chunks of dirt and grass, called sod. Sod schools had to be built carefully so that they did not fall down or let in rain.

Preparation Practice #4

Imagine finding out that your backyard is full of things made by American Indians long ago. That is what Lynn Ripley, who lives in Virginia, discovered. For years, she had been finding old things in her yard. Some of those things were arrowheads and broken bits of pots, bowls, and cups. An arrowhead is pointy, sharp, and almost like a triangle. American Indians used arrowheads for digging and hunting.

Preparation Practice #5

Walt Disney grew up on a farm in Missouri. He loved to draw animals. When Disney was seven years old he sold some of his drawings to his neighbors. Later, Disney began to draw cartoons. Disney became famous when he drew the Mickey Mouse cartoon character. The Disneyland theme park is named after him.

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KEY WORD OUTLINE

1. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____