Seeking Summarizing
What Is Summarizing?

Summarizing is how we take larger selections of text and reduce them to their bare essentials:

- the key ideas,
- the main points that are worth noting and remembering.

Webster's calls a summary the "general idea in brief form".
What Are We Doing When We Summarize?

We strip away the extra. We focus on the heart of the matter. We try to find the key words and phrases that, when uttered later, still manage to capture the G.I.S.T. of what we've read. We are trying to capture the main ideas and the crucial details necessary for supporting them.
When You Ask Your Students to Summarize, What Usually Happens?

➔ • they write down everything.
➔ • they write down next to nothing.
➔ • they give complete sentences.
➔ • they write way too much.
➔ • they don't write enough.
➔ • they copy word for word.
What Did You **Want** Them To Do?

- pull out main ideas.
- focus on key details.
- use key words and phrases.
- break down the larger ideas.
- write only enough to convey the gist.
- take succinct but complete notes.
How Can I Teach My Students to Summarize?

Please be warned: teaching summarizing is no small undertaking. It's one of the hardest strategies for students to grasp, and one of the hardest strategies for you to teach. You have to repeatedly model it and give your students ample time and opportunities to practice it. But it is a very valuable strategy and competency. Can you imagine your students succeeding in school without being able to break down content into manageable small succinct pieces? We ask students to summarize all the time, but we're terrible about teaching them good ways to do this!
After students have used selective underlining on a selection, have them turn the article over and attempt to create a summary paragraph of what they can remember of the key ideas in the piece. They should only look back at their underlining when they reach a point of being stumped. They can go back and forth between writing the summary and checking their underlining several times until they have captured the important ideas in the article in a single paragraph.
Their Skin

An elephant’s skin is wrinkled. The skin is almost one inch thick. It will burn if it is exposed to the sun for a long time. That is why elephants spend much of the day in the shade.

Elephants need to keep their skin in good condition. They bathe in water and spray the water over their backs with their trunks. They spray mud over themselves to make a mud pack. After they bathe, they throw dust over themselves. The mud and dust protects their skin from the hot sun.
Elephant’s skin wrinkled. Skin one inch thick. Burn exposed to sun. Spend day in shade.

Keep skin in good condition. Bathe in water, spray it over backs with trunks. Spray mud to make mud pack. Throw dust over themselves. Mud, dust protects.
Idea #2

Have students write successively shorter summaries, constantly refining and reducing their written piece until only the most essential and relevant information remains. They can start off with half a page; then try to get it down to two paragraphs; then one paragraph; then two or three sentences; and ultimately a single sentence.
G.I.S.T.

_______,' _________,' _________,' 

_______,' _________,' _________,
Idea #3

Teach students to go with the newspaper mantra: have them use the key words or phrases to identify only Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.
Idea #4

Take articles from the newspaper, and cut off their headlines. Have students practice writing headlines for (or matching the severed headlines to) the "headless" stories.
According to a recently released back pain relief report, most back pain sufferers have no idea how to eliminate their pain. Some use heat, others ice. From sleeping on the floor, to pillows underneath the legs, back pain relief techniques vary. But thanks to a free report, local back pain sufferers finally know what to do.

Back Pain?
Idea #5

Students imagine they are placing a classified ad or sending a telegram, where every word used costs them money. Tell them each word costs 10 cents, and then tell them they can spend "so much." For instance, if you say they have $2.00 to spend, then that means they have to write a summary that has no more than 20 words. You can adjust the amount they have to spend, and therefore the length of the summary, according to the text they are summarizing. Consider setting this up as a learning station, with articles in a folder that they can practice on whenever they finish their work early or have time when other students are still working.
Name ______________
Summary:

Words ____X 10¢= ______(total)
Idea #6

- A summarization strategy "SOMEBODY WANTED TO BUT SO"

For example, after reading chapter one from The Jacket by Andrew Clements

- SOMEBODY (Who) Phil

- WANTED to get his brother’s jacket back from the black kid named Daniel

- BUT Daniel claimed it was a birthday present from his Grandmother

- SO they ended up in the principal’s office
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<tr>
<th>Somebody</th>
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