



**RECORDING &  
REPRESENTING  
KNOWLEDGE**

**CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES  
TO HELP STUDENTS  
ACCURATELY ORGANISE  
AND SUMMARISE CONTENT**

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1. *Comprehension*: This creates the biggest stumbling block for learners at any level, whether they are primary students or PhD candidates. Learners cannot create summaries before they actually understand what they have heard or read. A good test for whether your students truly comprehend is to ask them to explain the critical content in a sentence or two to you or classmates. If students can't explain it, they need to go back and reread the text, ask questions about what they don't understand, figure out the meaning of new vocabulary, talk about the information with a partner, or find some other sources of information to help them make sense of it. Students must process the new content in some way for them to understand it. This expectation may require multiple readings of critical content to reach the level of comprehension required for summarisation.
2. *Chunking*: When you are presenting new content to students, you will likely make decisions about how to chunk content. After presenting one chunk of important information, resist the temptation to press on and stop talking. Give students an opportunity to think, pair and share about what you have said and then jot down some notes about what is most important. When students are reading text with summarisation as a goal, chunking that text into logical parts can reduce the frustration of trying to remember everything at once.
3. *Compacting*: This process takes text or a teacher's lecture with hundreds of words and multiple concepts and details and shrinks it down, or compacts it, into a neat and tidy package. Skilled readers and listeners learn to recognise the central idea and important details. They are also able to ignore trivial and unimportant information (this is not to say that the trivial and unimportant information might not be interesting to read). But, students can't remember everything. Model for your students how a skilled reader actually determines when information is worthy of being included in a summary. However, skilled readers learn that when they are taking notes and creating a summary, it must also contain a simple statement in their own words.
4. *Conceptualising*: This takes some practice, but once students have seen you model it several times, they will begin to come up with key words and ideas from a chunk of text or lesson presentation.

## Teach Various Prompts and Processes for Summarising

Teaching students how to summarise begins at the Foundation level. At this level students do less recording and more representing. However, by the time students are in Year 1, they can already record knowledge. It's up to you to teach them how to summarise during the recording process. The earlier they begin to think in terms of summarising whenever they hear a story read aloud or whenever the teacher explains something important, the more readily it will become a habit of the mind that follows them throughout middle and secondary school as well as university and career. Following are some examples of prompts and processes you can use to scaffold summarising for younger or struggling students.

### *Somebody-Wanted-But-So-Then (SWBST)*

This set of prompts helps students write a simple summary sentence about a story they have read or a section of a textbook that features a historical figure. To create a SWBST organiser, use the landscape view of a sheet of blank paper and divide it into four columns. Write the words *somebody*, *wanted* and *but* at the top of the first three columns. Write the phrase *so then* at the top of the fourth column. After students hear a story read aloud or read the story independently, have them fill in the information from the story or content. The final step involves combining the key words and phrases to form a summary sentence. For example, students read *The Emperor's New Clothes*. The teacher works with them to fill in each column with the appropriate information. Here's what the teacher and class came up with for their final summary statement: *The Emperor wanted outfits that would be invisible to people who weren't fit for their jobs, but he didn't realise that the weavers were only pretending to weave cloth, so (then) he was humiliated by appearing in public without any clothes on.* The SWBST sentences can get a little cumbersome, but this organiser is a good first step to understanding what a summary is all about.

### *Get the Gist*

Getting the gist of something is a quick way of describing that an individual has figured out the big idea of a story, presentation, TV show or movie. The term *gist* is the point or central idea. Using this approach, students determine the who, what, when, where, why and how of a concept or chunk of text. They then use those notes to write a twenty-word summary called a gist. Students can use this strategy for content-area texts to aid in their comprehension and summarising skills. (See a template for the Get the Gist organiser in Resource A.1.)

she give them a chance to work collaboratively in either a whole group discussion or with partners. They are expected to complete the work with very little direction and support from either their classmates or teacher. Many students are frustrated and unable to finish the assignment.

## Determining If Students Can Summarise Critical Content

Monitoring your students' mastery of summarising is an ongoing and sometimes frustrating experience. The degree of success students have when they summarise is heavily dependent on the difficulty level of the text they are reading and the amount of prior knowledge students have about a given topic or process. Here are some examples of monitoring that will allow you to assess whether students are achieving the desired result of your instruction and serve as cues that you may need to step back and provide more scaffolding for some students:

- Students discuss with partners the steps in the process of summarising as the teacher moves quickly about the room and listens for their understanding of the process.
- Students write summaries of a classroom discussion of text and give them to the teacher as their exit ticket. The teacher reads the summaries later and makes notes about students' progress and where reteaching or additional modelling may be required.

The student proficiency scale for summarising in Table 1.4 shows the range of student proficiencies for how successfully students are able to summarise the critical content of a specific lesson or text.

**Table 1.4: Student Proficiency Scale for Summarising**

Emerging	Fundamental	Desired Result
<p>Students are able to summarise critical content using written cues and prompts provided by the teacher.</p> <p>Students are unable to generate notes that summarise the critical information in the lesson without help from a peer partner or the teacher.</p>	<p>Students can write a summary of critical content in their own words that restates the central idea.</p> <p>Students can write a summary that includes some but not all of the supporting details.</p> <p>Students are unable to create a succinct summary.</p>	<p>Students can write a succinct summary sentence of critical content in their own words that restates the central idea and supporting details from a classroom lesson or independent reading.</p> <p>Students are able to explain their summarisation of critical information to peers or the teacher.</p>

informal outline, the most important concepts are written on the far left of your notes, and the supporting concepts are indented. You can begin your outline while I am presenting. As usual, after my instruction, I will give you an opportunity to discuss the periodic table in your groups and additional time to work on your outline.

After this brief introduction, the teacher presents a chunk of information about the periodic table. She then gives the students time to discuss (process) with their group what they learnt. After the discussion time is over, she gives them some time to create or finish their informal outlines. Figure 2.2 is an example of an informal outline describing the periodic table.

Figure 2.2: Example of an Informal Outline

**Periodic Table of Elements**

- I. A group is a vertical column in the periodic table
  - A. 18 groups
  - B. Some groups contain elements with very similar properties
  - C. Number of valence shell electrons determines group
- II. A period is a horizontal row in the periodic table
  - A. Seven periods
  - B. Some periods also show similar properties
  - C. Total number of electron shells determines period
- III. Elements are listed in order of increasing atomic number
  - A. Number of protons in atomic number

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## Instructional Technique 3

# GRAPHIC ORGANISERS

Graphic organisers are nonlinguistic representations of critical content. Teaching and modelling the purpose of a graphic organiser is a frequently forgotten step when your lesson plans include an organiser. You can all too easily assume that students understand organisers because they are used in every classroom. However, the big idea of using organisers is not how fancy they are or how much time you spend designing them. The big idea is that graphic organisers should enable students to organise new knowledge in ways that make learning more meaningful and memorable. If after the use of a specific organiser your students are not able to summarise and explain the content within, you need to return to the drawing board—not necessarily to develop a new organiser, but evaluate how effectively you have directly instructed and modelled for students how to use the organiser.

Students record their knowledge using nonlinguistic organisers that correspond to specific patterns commonly found in information. Initially, if students are new to this technique, teachers must choose the best graphic organiser to represent the information. Teachers need to instruct how to use a variety of visual tools and graphic organisers. After they have a greater understanding of the purposes of different types of organisers and how to use them, they will eventually be able to identify independently the best organiser for a given assignment.

### How to Effectively Implement Graphic Organisers

To effectively implement graphic organisers, you must master the following instructional tasks:

- understand the relationship of summarising to graphic organisers
- teach all of your students the critical attributes of graphic organisers
- choose graphic organisers that are most appropriate for your year level and content
- teach all of your students how to use each of the graphic organisers that you intend to work with frequently in your classroom

## The Narrative Frame

Read the assigned text and answer the following questions:

1. Who are the main characters, and what distinguishes them from others?
2. When and where did the story take place? What were the circumstances?
3. What prompted the action in the story?
4. How did the characters express their feelings?
5. What did the main characters decide to do? Did they set a goal, and, if so, what was it?
6. How did the main characters try to accomplish their goals?
7. What were the consequences?