



Family and Tutor Toolkit: Summarizing

**RIDE Literacy Learning Lab for Dyslexia,
Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia**

To access the full recording with Lindsay Kemeny, [click here](#).

What is this kit for

This kit helps your child learn how to summarize what they read. When children practice summarizing, they:

- Understand what they read more deeply
- Remember the most important ideas and ignore less important details
- Talk and write about texts more clearly
- Build confidence with school reading
- Understand how ideas connect

What is Summarizing ?

Summarizing means figuring out the most important ideas in a text and saying them in a shorter way. Another way to think about it is: “What is this text mostly about?” Research shows that summarizing is one of the most powerful ways to build reading comprehension of the text.

How can I support summarizing at home?

Talk About Reading Every Day 🗣️ 📖	While reading to your child or checking in with your child about their own reading, ask them, "Who/what was the book about? What was the most important part?"
Shrink the Paragraph ✂️	This is a powerful strategy called Paragraph Shrinking. Read a paragraph to your child and have them ask you: Who or what is this about? What is the most important thing? Can you say the main idea in 10 words or less? Then switch roles. Have your child read a paragraph and you can ask them the same questions. If they are unsure or do not get the answer correct, have them skim the text (or read it with them again) and try again.
Say it First, Then Write It 💡	Have your child say the summary aloud, using the who/what questions above. Then, have them repeat the sentence while they are writing it down.
Use Stories 📚	After reading a story, use the SWBST Strategy, which has the child identifying the following (orally or in writing): Somebody → Who is the story about? Wanted → What did they want? But → What was the problem? So → What did they do? Then → What happened in the end? Stories like fables or fairy tales are good to start with because they have a clear beginning, middle, and end.
Important ✓ or Unimportant ✗	After reading with your child, share a few details from the text. Some should be important to understanding the story or information, while others can be less important details. Ask your child to decide which details are important and explain how they help them understand what they read.
10 Words Only! 10	As you read, ask your child to answer who, what, where, when, why and how questions. Then, challenge your child to give you a 10 word summary after reading a paragraph once they get comfortable with the games above!

How can I support summarizing at home?

Caregiver Tips for Success

- **Start small:** It's ok to summarize one paragraph at a time! Building this habit at the paragraph level sets students up for success when they come across longer texts and passages.
- **Use grade level texts or stories you share:** Use texts that students are using in school for ELA ,science or social studies, or practice in stories you read with your child.
- **Share the reading:** When engaging in summary practice, it's ok to share the reading with your child, so that they can focus on making meaning of the text! As students build comfort with the text, they can do more of the reading when working on summarization.

How can I support students I am tutoring with summarization?

Highly Effective Strategies to Support Summarization

1. Paragraph Shrinking (Burns et al., 2024, also in Lindsay Kemeny presentation, 2026)
2. Generating a Gist Statement (IES Practice Guide, 2022, p.48)
3. SWBST (Somebody Wanted But So Then)
4. Writing a Summary. (Sedita, 2026)

Partner Reading Paragraph Shrinking (Lindsay Kemeny)

This strategy combines fluency and summarizing and can be used (or adapted) for use across grade levels.

Here are the steps as outlined by Lindsay Kemeny in her 2026 Learning Lab presentation and adapted for a tutoring environment:

1. Introduce the assigned text and purpose for reading.
2. The tutor and the student take turns as the “Coach” and “Player,” with the Tutor beginning in the role as the Player.
3. The Player reads aloud for about 5 minutes (no rereading) while the Coach asks the Player questions after each paragraph:
 - a. Who or what the paragraph is about
 - b. The most important detail
 - c. The main idea
4. Then, the Coach reads aloud for about 5 minutes (no rereading) and the Player asks the Coach the same questions.
5. If the response is incorrect, the Player asks the Coach to quickly skim and try again.
6. The Coach then states the main idea in 10 words or fewer to build concise thinking.
7. Partners switch roles and continue.
8. Optional: Award points when pairs complete the steps accurately.

- **Optional Resources for Paragraph Shrinking:** Watch this 7 minute overview to deepen your understanding of paragraph shrinking and access the resources from Lindsay Kemeny’s presentation to the Learning Lab. To see students engaging in paragraph shrinking, access minute 30 in Lindsay’s presentations. Students can also engage in error correction using the Ask, then Tell strategy.
- **Tips and Tricks for Tutoring:** Know to what degree the HQCM incorporates summarization and if any routines in particular are used. Following this guidance supports coherence between the work you are doing and what students receive in the classroom. Summary work can be called by many names (such as Gisting, Determining Important Information, Summarizing, Synthesizing, etc) so it’s imperative to be familiar with these materials so you can follow the same procedure learned in the classroom.