

Target Reading Skill: Summarize

Summarizing is a powerful skill. You can use it to check your understanding of what you read. It helps you remember, review, and organize your thoughts. The summary should not use all of the words in the text, but it should include the key words and main points of your reading.

Read the following text and the summary that follows.

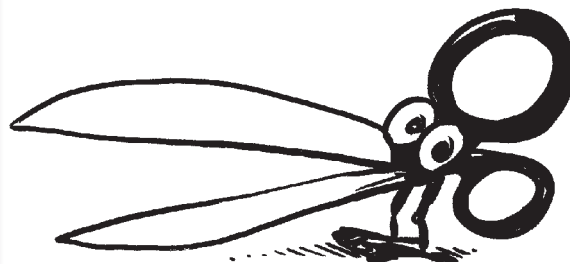
When scientists use the word *force*, it has a special meaning. A force is a push or a pull. When one object pushes or pulls another object, the first object exerts a force on the second object. You exert a force on a book when you lift it, on a zipper when you pull it, and on a nail when you hammer it into wood.

Like velocity and acceleration, forces are described not only by how strong they are, but also by the direction in which they act. If you push on a door you exert a different force than if you pull on the door.

Summary: A force is a push or a pull. Scientists describe a force in terms of its strength and direction.

What makes the summary above a good one? It includes the two main ideas of the text. It also includes the key words: force, push, pull, strength, and direction. Writing good summaries usually involves the following steps:

1. Find the main idea(s) of each paragraph you read.
2. Write down a few key words from each main idea.
3. Use the key words in your summary.
4. Reread the summary and keep only the most important ideas.



Summarize *(continued)***TRY THIS**

Read the following texts. Use the steps listed on the previous page to write a summary of each.

1.

Birds and the Environment

It's hard to imagine a world without birds. We all enjoy hearing them sing and watching them flit through trees. People also benefit from birds in practical ways. Birds and their eggs can provide food, while feathers can provide stuffing for pillows and clothing.

Birds play an even more important role in the environment. Nectar-eating birds, like hummingbirds, carry pollen from one flower to another, enabling some plants to reproduce. Seed-eating birds, like painted buntings, carry plant seeds to new places where they may grow into new plants. This happens when the birds eat the fruits or seeds of a plant, fly to a new location, and then eliminate some of the seeds in their digestive wastes. In addition, some birds hunt animals that are pests. For example, hawks and owls eat rats and mice, while many songbirds feed on insects.

Summary: _____

2.

Jane Goodall and the Study of Animal Behavior

One can hardly think of the study of animal behavior without thinking of the scientist Jane Goodall. Goodall grew up in England and was working as a secretary in Kenya when she was recruited to do research on chimpanzees by the famous physical anthropologist Louis Leakey. She began her observations on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in Tanzania in 1960. Among her important discoveries about these primates was that chimpanzees strip leaves off twigs to make a tool for finding termites in nests. Until this discovery, scientists thought only humans made tools. Goodall also observed that chimps eat meat, disproving the widely accepted notion that they were herbivores. Goodall's field of biology is called ethology, which is the comparative study of animals in the environment.

Summary: _____