Summarizing

Purpose:
To help students summarize fiction and non-fiction material.
There are three important guidelines for summarizing material:
• To effectively summarize, students need to delete some information, substitute some information, and keep some information. (i.e. Rule-Based Summarizing)
• To effectively delete, substitute, and keep information, students need to analyze the information at a fairly deep level. (i.e. Reciprocal Teaching)
• Being aware of the structure of the information is an aid to summarizing. (i.e. Summary Frames)

Procedures:
Rule-Based Summarizing
The rule-based summarizing strategy involves a set of rules or steps that students use to construct a summary and include:
1. Take out material that is not important for your understanding.
2. Take out words or passages that repeat information.
3. Replace a list of things with a word that describes the things in the list (e.g. use trees for elm, oak, and maple).
4. Find a topic sentence or invent one if it is missing.

Summary Frames
A summary frame is a series of questions designed to highlight the elements of text patterns:
Narrative or Story
• Who are the main characters? What are their characteristics?
• When and where did the story take place? What were the circumstances?
• What prompted the action in the story?
• How do the main characters express their feelings?
• What did the main characters decide to do? Did they set a goal, if so, what?
• How did the main characters try to accomplish their goals?
• How does the story turn out?

Topic-Restriction-Illustration
• What is the general statement or topic?
• What information narrows or restricts the general statement or topic?
• What examples illustrate the topic or restriction?

Definition
• What is being defined?
• To which general category does the item belong?
• What characteristics separate the item from other things in the general category?
• What are some different types or classes of the item being defined?
Argumentation
- What information is presented that leads to a claim?
- What is the basic statement or claim that is the focus of the information?
- What examples or explanations are presented to support this claim?
What concessions are made about the claim?

Problem or solution
- What is the problem?
- What is a possible solution?
- What is another possible solution?
- Which solution has the best chance of succeeding?

Conversation
- How did the members of the conversation greet each other?
- What question or topic was revealed or referred to?
- How did their discussion progress?
  - Did either person state facts? Did either person make a request of the other? Did either person demand a specific action of the other? Did either person threaten specific consequences if a demand was not met? Did either person indicate that he valued something that the other had done?
- How did the conversation conclude?

Reciprocal Teaching
Reciprocal teaching provides a deep level of understanding necessary for an effective summary and contains the following four components:
  Summarizing – After reading a short passage, a single student acting as the student leader summarizes what has been read. Other students may add to the summary.
  Questioning – The student leader asks some questions and the class responds. The questions are intended to identify important information in the passage.
  Clarifying – Next, the student leader tries to clarify confusing points in the passage. She may point them out or ask other students to find them.
  Predicting – The student leader asks for predictions about what will happen next in the text.