



# Retell, Recount, & Summarize

# Anchor Chart

## Types of Summaries



### Outlines



- skeleton framework
- great for notetaking for memorizing facts

### Descriptive Summary



- main points of an event
- no opinions

### Evaluative Summary



- main details and basic facts
- opinion heavy

### Executive Summary



- Specifies a course of action
- purpose - reader knows if a proposal is on track

### Abstracts



- short summary of long work such as a research paper
- outlines information

### Synopsis



- summary of a book
- conveys content and makes the work sound intriguing

This anchor chart briefly outlines six different types of summaries. Bullet points provide brief differences that upper elementary students may come across. The main gist you want students to understand is that not all summaries are the same. Different types of summaries are used for different purposes. Check out the definitions in this handout for more information.

Common Core uses the terms retell, recount, and summarize in the literature section. Just what does this mean? What prerequisite skills will upper-elementary students have as they enter 4th grade when they are now asked to summarize?

## **Retell**

In kindergarten and first grades, students ask and answer questions about stories they listen to. They use key ideas to retell stories. As the word retell implies, students must tell the story again not leaving out important details. Many teachers use simple charts asking students what happened at the beginning, middle, and end of the story. The focus is for students to stick to the main idea for each of these three parts in short simple stories. Asking appropriate questions when something is confusing or unclear to a student is encouraged. This is a lot for young students to grasp. Many are still working on retelling using key ideas in literature in upper grades.

## **Recount**

Beginning in second grade the terminology Common Core uses changes. Students now must recount. A recount is more than simply retelling. Students describe events. Unlike retell, where students tell what happens in the beginning, middle, and end, in a recount, students may describe a specific section of a story.

The material students are reading or listening to changes the way something is recounted. For example, students may recount an event that took place while on vacation. The student would not tell what they did first, second, third, and so on the entire trip as they would in a retell. Instead, recounting may be a journal entry that describes one event that took place and how this made the student feel.

Students may also recount factual events. These may include recounting an event from a news broadcast, history textbook, or newspaper. With these recounts, students are listing the main events in chronological order in sentence and paragraph formats.

Recounting also includes steps in a process. A student could recount a science experiment by telling the steps they followed. In this type of recount, the final outcome along with conclusions would also be incorporated in the recount.

In literary recounts, students would not only tell the key details in the beginning, middle, and end of the story but would also include the results of actions.

Recounts can go one step further. Students may be asked to take a factual event. Outline the main things that took place. Then turn these details into an imaginative recount. They could be flying with Emilie Earhart on her flight across the Atlantic. They could be fighting alongside the firefighter who rescues children from a burning building. The possibilities go on and on.

## Summarizing

Students begin summarizing in fourth grade. When students summarize, they are synthesizing a piece of writing, film, play, and so on. A good summary would include:

- identifying the original text
- combining details to make conclusions
- presenting the information

Note that summarizing is not paraphrasing. Paraphrasing means taking a piece of work and rewriting it using different words. These are about the same length as the original text. Summaries are much shorter than the original text.

Summarizing includes three steps:

- determining important or main ideas
- rejecting minor details
- substituting details by one or two sentences

Types of summaries depend on the content and audience.



# **Types of Summaries**

## **Outlines**

Outlines are a skeleton framework of the key details. They are often written with numbers and letters or bulleted points. Outlines may include sentence fragments. Information is quick and easy to read. Outlining text is a great way for students to learn facts in science and social studies. Students are creating notes of important details to memorize. Going through the process of outlining texts is a great way to remember important facts.

## **Descriptive Summaries**

With descriptive summaries, the writer is telling the main points of an event without including opinions. They are concise descriptions covering key details. Descriptive summaries can include the significance of the work that is summarized.

## **Evaluative Summary**

Writers not only list main details and basic facts about the material but also state viewpoints on the work. An evaluative summary is opinion-heavy. An evaluative summary tells the reader the usefulness of the original text.

## **Executive Summary**

An executive summary specifies a course of action. Students may be asked to write an executive summary of a science fair experiment or other assignments that require hours of work. An executive summary outlines a project. Its purpose is for the reader to know if a proposal is on track when they don't have time to read the full report or the report is in progress.

## **Abstracts**

An abstract is a short summary of a long work such as a research paper. It briefly states the research problem and objectives, methods, results, and conclusion. An abstract comes at the beginning of the research paper, so readers will know if the multi-page report will cover the information they seek before delving into the details of the research.

## **Synopsis**

A synopsis has the same purpose as an abstract. It helps readers determine if they wish to read the longer version. The difference between an abstract and a synopsis is the type of writing it summarizes. An abstract is a summary of a book. You will find these when you look at the back of books or visit online bookstores. A synopsis not only conveys the content of the book but makes it sound intriguing so readers will want to select the book to read.

**Are you looking for some specific activities to help students summarize? Check out these posts.**

[Summarizing Strategies](#) blog post contains definitions and activities on six different strategies for summarizing including:

- Who, What, Where, Why, and How
- Somebody Wanted Because But So
- GIST Summaries (Generating Interaction between Schemata and Text)
- Webbing
- Summarizing Strategies using Two-Column Notes
- Summarizing Strategies – Jigsaw Reading

[Using Animated Shorts to Teach Summarizing](#) – Free printables help students evaluate the animated short.

[Learning Log – A Teaching Strategy](#) – This post includes handouts of a \$2 Summary, 3-2-1 Strategy, and Square, Triangles, Circle.

[Inverted Pyramid Story](#) – This post includes four nonfiction text printables for students to find the main points (Who? What? When? Where? How? Why?) in the opening paragraph or two.

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