



# Summary: A How-To Guide

## **Summary: Definition**

- Creating a short paragraph (no more than 1/3 the length of the original) capturing the main idea, as well as the important supporting points, of any kind of a text (an article, an essay, a novel, a play, a story, a report, etc.); strictly adhering to author's points while using own words

## **Summarizing: Reasons**

- Providing background/reference for further analysis/opinion/interpretation
- Familiarizing readers with a text they haven't seen before
- Illuminating overall idea and most important points of long complex readings
- Increasing own level of reading comprehension

## **Summarizing: *Dos* and *Don'ts***

### **1. *Dos*:**

- Mention author, title, and main idea at the very beginning
- List the major supporting points/events/details, showing how they are each related to the main idea
- Use as many of your own words/expressions as possible while adhering to author's ideas

### **2. *Don'ts***

- Insert own opinion/interpretation/analysis
- Repeat the main idea or be overly specific with the details. For example, do not use multiple examples for the same point, present irrelevant trivia, statistics and quotes (unless they are crucial for grasping the main idea and/or major supporting points)
- Make it longer than 1/3 of the original text

## **Summarizing: Practice Activity**

Below is the article “Don’t Blame the Eater” by David Zinczenko, published in *The New York Times* on November 23, 2002. Read it carefully and, afterwards, compose a summary by following all the *Dos* and *Don’ts* from the list above. For your convenience, you may choose to do a pre-summary activity (outline provided after text) of determining the main idea, the crucial supporting points, and the transitions:

*If ever there were a newspaper headline custom-made for Jay Leno's monologue, this was it. Kids taking on McDonald's this week, suing the company for making them fat. Isn't that like middle-aged men suing Porsche for making them get speeding tickets? Whatever happened to personal responsibility?*

*I tend to sympathize with these portly fast-food patrons, though. Maybe that's because I used to be one of them.*

*I grew up as a typical mid-1980's latchkey kid. My parents were split up, my dad off trying to rebuild his life, my mom working long hours to make the monthly bills. Lunch and dinner, for me, was a daily choice between McDonald's, Taco Bell, Kentucky Fried Chicken or Pizza Hut. Then as now, these were the only available options for an American kid to get an affordable meal. By age 15, I had packed 212 pounds of torpid teenage tallow on my once lanky 5-foot-10 frame.*

*Then I got lucky. I went to college, joined the Navy Reserves and got involved with a health magazine. I learned how to manage my diet. But most of the teenagers who live, as I once did, on a fast-food diet won't turn their lives around: They've crossed under the golden arches to a likely fate of lifetime obesity. And the problem isn't just theirs -- it's all of ours.*

*Before 1994, diabetes in children was generally caused by a genetic disorder -- only about 5 percent of childhood cases were obesity-related, or Type 2, diabetes. Today, according to the National Institutes of Health, Type 2 diabetes accounts for at least 30 percent of all new childhood cases of diabetes in this country.*

*Not surprisingly, money spent to treat diabetes has skyrocketed, too. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that diabetes accounted for \$2.6 billion in health care costs in 1969. Today's number is an unbelievable \$100 billion a year.*

*Shouldn't we know better than to eat two meals a day in fast-food restaurants? That's one argument. But where, exactly, are consumers -- particularly teenagers -- supposed to find alternatives? Drive down any thoroughfare in America, and I guarantee you'll see one of our country's more than 13,000 McDonald's restaurants. Now, drive back up the block and try to find someplace to buy a grapefruit.*

*Complicating the lack of alternatives is the lack of information about what, exactly, we're consuming. There are no calorie information charts on fast-food packaging, the way there are on grocery items. Advertisements don't carry warning labels the way tobacco ads do. Prepared*

*foods aren't covered under Food and Drug Administration labeling laws. Some fast-food purveyors will provide calorie information on request, but even that can be hard to understand.*

*For example, one company's Web site lists its chicken salad as containing 150 calories; the almonds and noodles that come with it (an additional 190 calories) are listed separately. Add a serving of the 280-calorie dressing, and you've got a healthy lunch alternative that comes in at 620 calories. But that's not all. Read the small print on the back of the dressing packet and you'll realize it actually contains 2.5 servings. If you pour what you've been served, you're suddenly up around 1,040 calories, which is half of the government's recommended daily calorie intake. And that doesn't take into account that 450-calorie super-size Coke.*

*Make fun if you will of these kids launching lawsuits against the fast-food industry, but don't be surprised if you're the next plaintiff. As with the tobacco industry, it may be only a matter of time before state governments begin to see a direct line between the \$1 billion that McDonald's and Burger King spend each year on advertising and their own swelling health care costs.*

*And I'd say the industry is vulnerable. Fast-food companies are marketing to children a product with proven health hazards and no warning labels. They would do well to protect themselves, and their customers, by providing the nutrition information people need to make informed choices about their products. Without such warnings, we'll see more sick, obese children and more angry, litigious parents. I say, let the deep-fried chips fall where they may.*

**Main**

**Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting Points:**

**Point #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Transition Word:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Point #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Transition Word:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Point #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Transition Word:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Point #4:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Begin your summary**

**here:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

