

Units 1 & 2 Writing worksheet

Writing a summary

GOAL: write a summary of an article for a class newsletter.

Include: the main idea and supporting points; key words and phrases; linked ideas; expressions for presenting points in summaries.

1 Review the title and key words of a text from *Life* Unit 1, page 12. What ideas and details from the text do you remember?

A confused generation

ambition	benefit	change	confused
duty	family	fighting	generation
learn	modern	old	values

2 Read the article from *Life* Unit 1, page 12. Compare your ideas from Exercise 1 with the information in the text.

Change brings problems. Bella lives with her parents in a brand new apartment in Shanghai. Her real name is Zhou Jiaying – ‘Bella’ is the name that she has been given by her English teacher. Her parents are representative of a confused generation in a confused time. In modern Chinese society different ideologies are fighting against each other. Enormous material benefits have been brought by China’s economic boom, but the debate is not about these; it’s about family life and values. Old values – the respect of family and the older generations – are being replaced by new ones which place money as the critical measurement of one’s position in society. But at the same time these new values are also being questioned. Have our lives been made richer by all our new possessions? Is Chinese culture being supplanted? ¹As in all changing societies people are trying to find the right balance between the ‘new’ and ‘old’.

Recently, Bella’s family put their grandfather into a nursing home. ²It was a painful decision. ³In traditional China, caring for aged parents has always been an unavoidable duty, but times are changing. Bella’s ambition? ‘I want one day to put my parents in the best nursing home’ – the best that money can buy, she means.

‘When she told us that’ Bella’s father says, ‘I thought – is it selfish to think she will be a dutiful and caring daughter and look after us? We don’t want to be a burden on her when we get old. This is something my daughter has taught us. ⁴Once it was parents who taught children, but now we learn from them.’ The family can buy many more things these days, and when they go shopping, Bella makes sure that the ‘right’ western

brands are selected. ⁵(Pizza Hut is her favourite restaurant.) She also teaches her parents the latest slang.

Her parents want to be supportive, but they no longer help with Bella's homework; in spoken English she has surpassed them. She has already learnt much more about the world outside than them. 'Our advice is not listened to and it is not wanted,' her mother says. 'When she was little, she agreed with all my opinions. Now she sits there without saying anything, but I know she doesn't agree with me.' Bella glares, but says nothing. 'I suppose our child-raising has been a failure.' ⁶In China there is no concept of the rebellious teenager.

Writing skill including the main idea and supporting points in a summary

Main idea

The opening paragraph of a text often contains the main idea. The rest of the text relates to this idea. Include this main idea in the opening part of your summary to help make your summary clear and well organised.

Supporting points

Look for other important points throughout the text that support the main idea. Highlight these points and use them in your summary.

Details and examples

Writers often include smaller details and examples too. You do not need to include these in your summary. Remember – the summary should be much shorter than the original text.

3 Look at the three underlined sentences in the first paragraph from the text in Exercise 2. Which one contains the main idea?

4 Find the sentences numbered 1–6 from the text in Exercise 2. Decide if they are supporting points (SP) or details and examples (DE).

- 1 ____
- 2 ____
- 3 ____
- 4 ____
- 5 ____
- 6 ____

Writing mechanics including key words and phrases

Key words and phrases often appear in the main ideas of the text. They are usually repeated and/or synonyms and antonyms are used in the rest of the text.

*Her parents are representative of a **confused** generation in a **confused** time.
In **modern** Chinese society ... **Old** values ... are being replaced by **new** ones ...*

When writing a summary, you can include these key words and phrases. However, you must be careful to use them in your own sentences. Avoid copying whole sentences from the original text.

*~~In modern Chinese society different ideologies are fighting against each other.~~
~~Nowadays, people in Chinese society often have different ideas about how to live.~~*

5 Read four supporting points from the text in Exercise 2 and identify key words and phrases. Then rewrite the sentences.

1 Her parents are representative of a confused generation in a confused time.

.....

2 But at the same time these new values are also being questioned.

.....

3 In traditional China, caring for aged parents has always been an unavoidable duty, but times are changing.

.....

.....

4 Her parents want to be supportive, but they no longer help with Bella's homework; in spoken English she has surpassed them. She has already learnt much more about the world outside than them.

.....

.....

6 Now read a summary of *A confused generation*. Compare your sentences from Exercise 5 to those in the summary.

The text deals with the problems of change in China. The author highlights the difficulties families are facing. The modern world is changing fast and, as a result, older people often have different values to younger people. People are also questioning whether the new values are any better than the old ones. Families want to find the right mix of modern and old. The author gives the example of Bella's family. Chinese families have traditionally taken care of older members at home, but this is no longer the case. In contrast to tradition, Bella plans to place her parents in a nursing home when the time comes. Her parents are not happy, but they feel they are not in control anymore. Roles have reversed, and although parents try to help their children, their lack of knowledge and understanding of the world around means they can't.

The author concludes with the point that families are having problems discussing these issues. They need to talk about them in order to deal with them. However, this does not happen.

Writing mechanics linking ideas logically

Summaries need to show logical connections clearly and in a few words. Use transition words and phrases to make these connections effectively.

For example:

*The modern world is changing fast and, **as a result**, older people often have different values ...*

***In contrast** to tradition, Bella plans to place her parents in a nursing home when the time comes.*

*They need to talk about them **in order to** deal with them.*

7 Choose the correct option.

- 1 Younger people often have different values. *In order to / Consequently*, it can be difficult for the older generation to understand them.
- 2 Parents used to teach their children everything. *In contrast, / So as to*, young people nowadays teach their parents about the modern world.
- 3 Families need to listen to each other *so as to / as a result* understand the changes.
- 4 *In order to / Unlike* the old days, young people are more independent now.
- 5 The world is changing fast. *So as to, / As a result*, the gap between generations is increasing.
- 6 Parents should engage with modern ideas *in order to / in contrast* understand their children.

WRITE

8 Read the title and first two paragraphs of the article in *Life* Unit 2, page 24. Underline the main idea. Circle key words and phrases.

A close shave

Kaziranga National Park in India is home to two of the world's most endangered species: the tiger and the single-horned rhino. Photographer Steve Winter and writer Douglas Chadwick had only been working there a few days when they had a rather frightening close shave with some rhinos.

They were driving into the park to start filming, when their guide stopped the jeep to move a turtle from the middle of the road just ahead of them. Winter, Chadwick and their guard got out to stretch their legs and watch. But when Chadwick turned to look up the road, he saw something terrible.

9 Read the rest of *A close shave* on page 24. Use note form and key words and phrases to complete the plan for a summary.

Summary plan

Main idea

.....

Supporting points

.....

.....

.....

.....

10 Look at the *Key language* box. Which expressions does the writer use in the text in Exercise 6?

Key language expressions for presenting points in summaries

Introduction

The text describes / presents / deals with ...

Main points

The author states / says / highlights that ...

The writer believes / claims / argues that ...

Supporting points

The author compares / gives the example of / describes ...

Conclusion

The author ends by saying / concludes ...

11 Write a summary of *A close shave* for a class newsletter, using about 100 words. Use your plan, transition words and expressions from the *Key language* box.

12 Read your partner's work and tick (✓) the checklist.

Has your partner ...

☐ ... included the main and supporting points?

☐ ... used key words and phrases?

☐ ... linked ideas logically?

☐ ... summarised the text in his or her own words?