



## Writing a summary

In this activity, students summarise information from three different sources on the topic 'Is the use of radiation in medicine justified?'.

### Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- locate and use three sources of information about a topic
- identify the key points covered in their sources
- write a summary based on their research.

### Time required

60 minutes plus homework (the research activity could also be set for homework, but some lesson time would be needed to brief the students).

### Outline of the activity

Management of the task depends on whether students are looking at the same topic (e.g. catalytic converters), or choosing their own. This outline assumes the former, but can easily be adapted.

- 1 Explain that the main purpose of the activity is to practise writing summaries.
- 2 Outline the topic that students are going to research in this activity.
- 3 Tell the students that they need to write a list of questions they would like to find out about. You could issue the briefing sheet to help them with this task. This should be done on an individual basis.
- 4 Give the students a few minutes to think about which sources of information they are going to use. Tell them to provide specific information about each source, saying 'the Internet' is not enough.
- 5 Explain briefly what you expect from the students in terms of their summary. See briefing sheet 2, issued to assist students with this task.
- 6 Students now need to carry out their research

- this could be done in class time, or it could be set as homework. Ensure that students have access to required resources such as the Internet, library and textbooks.

7 Students could write their summaries in class if time allows, but it is probably more appropriate to be set as homework.

8 If time allows, you might organise peer assessment of the summaries, or you may mark them yourself.

### Tips and strategies



If you specify the topic yourself and you wish to steer the students in a particular direction to suit your teaching, you could select one resource (e.g. an article or textbook entry) to get students started. Two Catalyst articles 'Medical Imaging' and 'Radioactivity in medicine' are provided.

If some students find coming up with questions difficult, you could start a brief discussion so that students can share some ideas first.

Students should not get too carried away - they need to write a summary, not a review. You may choose to allow them to use more than three sources, but it would probably be inappropriate to use more than five.

Encourage students to explore using document templates. These can become more sophisticated as they learn about additional features.



## Writing a summary: briefing sheet 1

Your task is to write a summary of information from three different sources. Your teacher may give you a topic, or tell you to choose your own. This briefing sheet will help you to choose some questions to investigate.

### Part 1 Selecting questions to find out about

1 Select your questions before you look at any sources of information. Write down a few questions (six to eight) you would like to find out about. These should include general questions about the topic such as 'Is the use of radiation in medicine justified?'.

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2 Which sources of information are you going to use? Be as specific as you can - don't just say 'textbooks' or 'the Internet', but give some idea of which books or web sites.

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3 When carrying out the research task, you will need to make notes based on what you find in your sources of information. This activity is an opportunity to practise skills learned through other LSS activities, such as reading and representing text using visual methods.



## Writing a summary: briefing sheet 2

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### Part 2 Writing a summary

This is a guide to the process of writing your summary.

As always, it is good practice to write a first draft. You could record your findings under the following headings before starting this.

1 Title of summary:

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2 Short introduction explaining why your questions are important, and how they relate to the topic:

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3 Short explanation of how you found out the information and where you looked:

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4 What are your conclusions about what you have learned?

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The final draft of your summary should be in the following format:

Length: 1 page of A4 (no more than 500 words)

Font: Arial

Title: 16 point font, bold, centred

Name of author(s)  
and institution: 12 point font, italicised, aligned left  
(this is you and your school)

Summary text: 12 point font, aligned left

It is important to stick to the format specified, as many scientific publications and journals ask that articles are submitted in a particular format. In some cases, articles may be rejected if they are in an incorrect format.

5 Create a template in Word or another word-processing package to conform to this format. Save the template so you can use or adapt it in future. Send your work to your teacher electronically so they can check your template, or use other members of your group to review this work.