

Warm up

Ask students what experience they have had of summarizing something they have heard. If any of the students have taken EFL listening exams with summarizing tasks, discuss the skills they needed to complete these tasks. Ask students if they have ever needed to write a summary of a lecture – perhaps in order to revise for an exam. Elicit the steps they followed to do this.

Using the Factsheet

Get students to work through the Factsheet first before they go on to practise using the Worksheet.

There are two possible ways to use the Factsheet:

- 1 Give students the Factsheet before the lesson, so they can read it at home and come to the lesson prepared to do the Worksheet. If you use this approach, start the lesson by checking that all students have read and understood the Factsheet, and answer any questions.
- 2 Give students the Factsheet at the beginning of the lesson and start by working through it with the students.

Theory to practice**Possible answers**

- 1 Accept any suitable answers. Alternative medicine is any remedy or intervention that is not accepted by mainstream medical professionals. Examples include reflexology, homeopathy, dolphin therapy, acupuncture, *t'ai chi*, laughter therapy, apitherapy.

Alternative medicine	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People think 'natural' means 'safe' • Offers something different for people who have bad experiences of conventional medicine • Offers attractive therapies like swimming with dolphins • Ancient therapies have proven benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a cutting-edge science • Doesn't have the brightest minds in the field • Doesn't have billions of dollars spent on medical research and development (unlike conventional medicine) • Positive results often just wishful thinking • Expensive • People miss out on effective conventional medicine

- 3 Some people believe there are benefits to alternative medicine, such as it being safer than conventional medicine because it is 'natural'. However, the results of scientific studies have not found evidence to verify this belief or to show alternative medicine actually works. It is claimed that older therapies are proven to work, with perhaps some evidence. In fact, there are several disadvantages of alternative medicine. It can be costly, it may prevent people using successful conventional medicine, and it lacks investment and research to develop it further. Hopes of it being useful may be an illusion.
- 4 Other possible relevant information includes the fact that alternative medicine is a huge industry, and the possibility of 'free' alternative medicine like laughing.

Transcript

What do you do when you feel unwell? Perhaps you lie in bed and rest, waiting for it to pass. Or perhaps you turn to a trusted, home-made remedy that experience tells you is the best way to get better. Or, maybe, you go to your local health centre and explain your symptoms. Your doctor may give you a prescription for some medicine, or they might refer you to a specialist. But millions of people are choosing another option. They are bypassing conventional medical advice and going down the route of so-called 'alternative therapy' or 'alternative medicine'. There is some disagreement over the best definition of 'alternative' in this sense, but it could be described as 'any remedy or intervention that is not accepted by mainstream medical professionals'.

One example of an alternative therapy is reflexology. Reflexologists apply pressure to certain points on the patient's hands and feet. They believe these points can be manipulated to heal corresponding points in the rest of the body. They use charts like this one. Another alternative medicine commonly used is homeopathy, where patients are given a highly diluted substance in the belief that it will cause the body to start healing itself.

But how popular is alternative medicine? While global statistics are not readily available, we know that it is a huge industry. In the United States alone, the public spend around \$30 billion each year on alternative medicines and therapies. This number is a small fraction of the total healthcare costs. But it is nevertheless an extraordinarily high figure, when you think of all the advantages that mainstream medicine has: cutting-edge science, the brightest minds in the field and, of course, the billions of dollars spent on medical research and development. And yet more and more people seem to be turning away from doctors and hospitals, and towards unproven treatments like reflexology and homeopathy. So why is alternative medicine so popular?

Firstly, there is the belief that many people have that 'natural' means 'safe and healthy', while 'artificial' means 'imperfect and maybe even dangerous'. Secondly, people have had negative experiences with mainstream medicine – for example, a painful procedure that didn't alleviate symptoms or nasty side effects from a drug – and they want to try something different. Finally, alternative therapies often seem so intuitively attractive that we just really want them to work! A good example of an attractive treatment is dolphin therapy. Dolphin therapy has become very popular in the last few decades, with over 100 programmes around the world. These programmes claim a number of benefits, such as improving communication in children with autism, lengthening concentration spans and reducing stress and depression. The claim is that the ultrasound waves emitted by dolphins have special healing powers. It's a beautiful idea ... but not one that's supported by much evidence. In fact, critics claim that any positive results are likely caused by wishful thinking and the positive effects of experiencing something as wonderful as swimming with dolphins.

In fact, time and time again, research into alternative therapies fails to find any compelling evidence for their medical benefits. This has led some scientists to suggest that there is no such thing as alternative medicine. They argue that if something can be studied and shown to be effective, it becomes part of mainstream medicine. If it can't, it's not medicine at all! However, some argue there are exceptions and that some alternative therapies seem to have genuine, proven benefits for certain conditions.

First, there is acupuncture. There is a wide range of approaches to acupuncture, but generally it involves the patient lying still while between five and twenty needles are inserted into their skin. The needles are normally left in the skin for ten to twenty minutes. Acupuncture has been shown to be effective in relieving some types of pain, especially in the knee. So how does it work? It was originally based on a theory that there is an energy – or life force – which flows through our bodies. When this free flow is interrupted, problems arise. Many advocates of acupuncture believe it helps to restore the free flow of this energy. However, some western acupuncturists have a slightly different explanation for the effectiveness of the therapy. They believe that sensory nerves under the skin are stimulated by the needles, prompting the body to release natural substances such as endorphins, which can help to relieve pain.

Another alternative to conventional medicine is *t'ai chi*. This ancient Chinese martial art is now practised worldwide as an exercise routine and is described as 'the perfect exercise for the elderly'. Not only can it reduce stress and blood pressure and increase stamina, it can also improve balance. This means it reduces the risk of older people having falls.

Many alternative therapies, such as *t'ai chi* and acupuncture, are centuries old. They are quite well known around the world. There are, however, other practices suggested as medically beneficial, which you may not have heard of before, and which may seem unlikely. Most experts agree that laughing is good for you, reducing stress and boosting the immune system. But don't we need to find funny things to make us laugh? Not according to laughter therapy practitioners. They organize sessions where everybody is asked to start laughing. Often, this fake laughter turns into real laughter. Advocates of the therapy report several health benefits. While laughter therapy might sound fun, apitherapy certainly doesn't. Apitherapy can involve a patient being stung hundreds of times by bees. Supporters of this bee-sting therapy claim a whole host of health benefits. Once again, though, none of these are supported by medical research.

So, it seems that alternative medicine does not stand up to scientific scrutiny. But is there any harm in it? Well, problems can arise when patients only use alternative medicine, as they are likely to be missing out on vital conventional medicine. And then, of course, there is the cost. A course of dolphin therapy, for example, costs thousands of dollars. So let's finish with two exercises that are totally free and you can do right now!

Academics at McGill University in Canada have designed a game that has proven effective at combating stress. A player looks at a series of screens like this one, showing people's faces with different expressions. On each screen, players are asked to click on the smiling face. This brings up another screen of faces, and again the player clicks the smiling face, and so on. The theory behind the game is that by moving away from the frowning faces and towards the smiling ones, people are creating a healthy mental habit. This habit will then transfer into everyday life. Thus, when the person has a negative experience, they will automatically move on to think about something more positive. Clever stuff!

And finally, this is Mount Fuji in Japan. Beautiful, isn't it? One man claims that just staring at a photo of the mountain is enough to cure you of mild depression, or at least lift your spirits. Why not try it for a few moments. Notice anything?

Using the Worksheet

Practice

- 1** Paraphrasing, collective nouns and synonyms are useful when you are writing summaries. Match the phrases in the box to their synonyms (a–f).

- Students could complete this exercise individually, then check answers in pairs.

Answers

- a immediately
- b mustn't be done
- c quoted
- d most people
- e nowadays
- f electrical gadgets

- 2** Changing grammatical structures can help you to write summaries. Complete the rewritten sentences using the word in brackets.

- Depending on students' level of confidence with this exercise, you could go through it as a class, giving further examples of each structure for students to work on if necessary. All of the sentences involve changes in tense/aspect.

Answers

- a abolishing internet communication was taken
- b decision was taken
- c was estimated
- d is being introduced
- e consider agriculture

- 3** Read part of a transcript from a lecture. Follow the steps to summarize it.

- You can give students a clue for step **a** by telling them there are two main examples in the transcript; see if they can find them both. Step **b** is more open to interpretation, since there are many phrases in the text which could be reworded. Elicit a few ideas, along with suggestions for how to reword them, before moving on to step **c**.

Possible answers

a/b Phrases are highlighted as follows:

a unnecessary examples

b long phrases which could be reworded

In the third and fourth decades of the 20th century, all over the world there was a depression. By depression, I mean that there was an economic crisis whereby many people had lost their jobs and huge numbers were homeless and hungry. For example, in the USA, the number of people without jobs reached 15 million. This had a huge impact on the direction of politics at that time. In fact, it could be argued that it was a contributing factor to the Second World War. I will explain what I mean a bit later. In Europe, there was a great deal of suffering due to this crisis, but in some countries, like Germany, there were other factors contributing to the weakening of the economy – Germany, as a defeated power of the First World War, was having to pay money to cover damage done to countries during the war. This led to the economy spiralling out of control – inflation increasing rapidly to the point where a loaf of bread cost millions of marks. Spain, also ...

- c In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a worldwide economic depression. Vast numbers of people were unemployed, homeless and without food. This, along with other problems, such as Germany paying First World War reparations to the detriment of their economy, arguably led to the Second World War.

4 Compare your summary from Exercise 3 with a partner. Do you agree on the main message of the text? Was it easy to sum it up in 50 words?

- Use this exercise to hear what students have written and to work on techniques to reduce their word count, if necessary.

Reflect

5 Discuss the questions.

- Point out how summarizing helps us to understand the main point of what is being said. If you think a lot of students need more work in the same area (for example, rewording), you might like to give them some extra exercises on it.

Learning outcome

By the end of the lesson, students should:

- know how to plan and write a summary from what they hear
- be more familiar with some effective methods to rephrase, condense and briefly explain information

Ending the lesson

If there is any extra time, play students a brief news item or read them a section of prose, and give them a few minutes to summarize it. Then students can compare their summaries.