

PTE Academic Lesson Plan Ideas: Test Taking Strategies

Lesson 6 – Summarize written text

Time allocated: 60 minutes

Step 1: Introduce the Item Type

This is a short-answer writing item type that integrates writing and reading skills. It requires test takers to understand, analyze and extract information from a reading passage and summarize the key points in one sentence.

Read the passage below and summarize it using one sentence. Type your response in the box at the bottom of the screen. You have 10 minutes to finish this task. Your response will be judged on the quality of your writing and on how well your response presents the key points in the passage.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released a new report on anthropogenic climate change. The findings of the report include the following:

- The world's average surface temperature has increased by around 0.74°C over the past 100 years (1906 - 2005). A warming of about 0.2°C is projected for each of the next two decades.
- The best estimates for sea-level rise due to ocean expansion and glacier melt by the end of the century (compared to 1989 - 1999 levels) have narrowed to 28 - 58 cm, versus 9 - 88 cm in the 2001 report, due to improved understanding. However, larger values of up to 1 m by 2100 cannot be ruled out if ice sheets continue to melt as temperature rises.
- Sea ice is projected to shrink in both the Arctic and Antarctic regions. Large areas of the Arctic Ocean could lose year-round ice cover by the end of the 21st century if human emissions reach the higher end of current estimates. The extent of Arctic sea ice has already shrunk by about 2.7 per cent per decade since 1978, with the summer minimum declining by about 7.1 per cent per decade.
- Snow cover has decreased in most regions, especially in spring. The maximum extent of frozen ground in the winter/spring season decreased by about 7 per cent in the Northern Hemisphere over the latter half of the 20th century. The average freezing date for rivers and lakes in the Northern Hemisphere over the past 150 years has arrived later by some 5.8 days per century, while the average break-up date has arrived earlier by 6.5 days per century.
- It is "very likely" that precipitation will increase at high latitudes and "likely" it will decrease over most subtropical land regions. The pattern of these changes is similar to what has been observed during the 20th century.

Cut

Copy

Paste

Total Word Count: 0

Step 2: Present the Item Type Strategies

Strategy 1

Remember to skim and scan. Quickly skim the text first for gist, and then scan it and note keywords.

Strategy 2

Once you have noted the keywords, use them to write quick notes to sum up the main argument of the text without looking back at the passage. Use your own words to condense these notes into a clear, precise summarizing sentence.

Strategy 3

When you have finished writing, check for the following: 1) you have written one sentence only which is within the required word count (between 5 and 75 words); 2) you have retained the essence of the text; 3) your grammar and spelling are correct. Remember that if your sentence is shorter or longer than the required word count, your response will automatically be scored zero.

Step 3: Explain and Practice Each Strategy

Strategy 1

Explain to your students that they will have ten minutes for this item type. Although this may seem like a long time to write one sentence, extracting the essence of the text and condensing this in their own words may take longer than they realize. It is therefore important that students remain focused and skim and scan the text as quickly and thoroughly as possible to identify the gist, the keywords and the main arguments. Remind your students that we skim for gist and scan for details.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities:

- Give students copies of Item 1.
- Give students 30 seconds to quickly skim the text and identify the gist (e.g., climate change: increasing surface temperature causing rising sea levels, shrinking sea ice and snow cover, and changes in precipitation).
- Give students one minute to scan the text and write down keywords and important points (e.g., *UN report, climate change, surface temperature increase, sea level rise, ocean expansion, glacier melt*, etc).

Strategy 2

Remind your students that once they have noted the keywords, they need to construct their summary as quickly as possible. One way to do this is to use the keywords to write quick notes or phrases that sum up the main argument(s) of the text. Remind them to try to do this without looking back at the passage. Explain that students should then use their own words to condense these notes into a clear, precise summarizing sentence.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Have students quickly read the passage for Item 1 again.
- Display the following phrases:
UN report, climate change, surface temperature increase, sea level rise, ocean expansion, glacier melt
- Ask students to arrange these keywords into brief notes that sum up the main argument of the text. Remind them not to look back at the passage and encourage them to paraphrase the keywords where possible (e.g., *UN report on climate change states that ...; increases in surface temperatures are causing sea levels to rise, oceans to expand, and glaciers to melt ...*)
- Have students share their ideas with the class.
- Have students work with a partner to create a clear and precise summarizing sentence. Again, encourage them not to look back at the passage and to paraphrase where possible (e.g., *A UN report on climate change states that increasing temperatures are causing glacier melt, rising sea levels and loss of coastal land.*)
- Have students share their sentences with other pairs and discuss the differences in the sentences they have written and what could be improved.

Strategy 3

Explain to your students that once they have written their sentence, it is important for them to take a moment to check that they have written one sentence only, that it is within the required word count (5 to 75 words), that they have retained the essence of the text, and that their grammar and spelling is correct. Remind them that their response will not be scored if it does not meet the word count requirements.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Give students five minutes to compare the notes they made in the first activity and work together to write a sentence that accurately summarizes the passage. Explain that the time they have is for planning and writing, and that they will have extra time for checking afterwards.
- After five minutes, give students one more minute to check their work. Remind them of what they need to check for, i.e., that they have written one sentence only, that it is within the required word count (5 to 75 words), that they have retained the essence of the text, and that their grammar and spelling are correct.
- Put pairs into groups of four and have them check and evaluate each other's sentences.
- Give each group four copies of the sample sentences for Item 1. Have students check the sentences for length, content, grammar and spelling, etc. Ask them to also rank the sentences from the weaker to the stronger.
- After they have done this, show the explanations for Item 1.

Step 4: Respond to a Summarize Written Text Item

Explain to your students that they will now respond to a test item simulating the test conditions. They will have ten minutes to read the passage and write their response. Remind them of the three strategies covered in this lesson and ask them to apply these strategies.

Give out copies of Item 2.

Step 5: Provide Feedback

Ask your students if they were able to use the strategies. Which one was the most difficult to apply? Which one do they think was the most useful? Ask students to compare and evaluate each other's responses in pairs or groups.

Then show the three sample responses for Item 2 and ask students to rank the responses from the weaker to the stronger. Then provide the explanations for Item 2.

Item 1

Read the passage below and summarize it using one sentence. Write your response in the box at the bottom of the page. You have 10 minutes to finish this task. Your response will be judged on the quality of your writing and on how well your response presents the key points in the passage.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released a new report on anthropogenic climate change. The findings of the report include the following:

- The world's average surface temperature has increased by around 0.74°C over the past 100 years (1906 - 2005). A warming of about 0.2°C is projected for each of the next two decades.
- The best estimates for sea-level rise due to ocean expansion and glacier melt by the end of the century (compared to 1989 - 1999 levels) have narrowed to 28 - 58 cm, versus 9 - 88 cm in the 2001 report, due to improved understanding. However, larger values of up to 1 m by 2100 cannot be ruled out if ice sheets continue to melt as temperatures rise.
- Sea ice is projected to shrink in both the Arctic and Antarctic regions. Large areas of the Arctic Ocean could lose year-round ice cover by the end of the 21st century if human emissions reach the higher end of current estimates. The extent of Arctic sea ice has already shrunk by about 2.7 per cent per decade since 1978, with the summer minimum declining by about 7.1 per cent per decade.
- Snow cover has decreased in most regions, especially in spring. The maximum extent of frozen ground in the winter/spring season decreased by about 7 per cent in the Northern Hemisphere over the latter half of the 20th century. The average freezing date for rivers and lakes in the Northern Hemisphere over the past 150 years has arrived later by some 5.8 days per century, while the average break-up date has arrived earlier by 6.5 days per century.
- It is "very likely" that precipitation will increase at high latitudes and "likely" it will decrease over most subtropical land regions. The pattern of these changes is similar to what has been observed during the 20th century.

Item 1: Sample Responses

Key Points

A new UN report finds that increasing surface temperature around the world is causing rising sea levels, shrinking sea ice and snow cover, and changes in precipitation.

B1 Response

United intergovernmental panel on climate change report that climatic changes in northern hemisphere will cause drastic change in sea current and will raise the sea level.

B2 Response

Due to the latest report of IPCC about the worldwide climate, Green House Effect has affected the earth severely on various aspects.

C1 Response

A new UN report finds that increasing surface temperatures around the world are causing rising sea levels, shrinking sea ice and snow cover, and changes in precipitation.

Item 1: Sample Responses and Explanations

B1 Response

United intergovernmental panel on climate change report that climatic changes in northern hemisphere will cause drastick change in sea current and will raise the sea level.

Explanation: While the response includes one key detail, other information from the passage is omitted or misinterpreted. Missing or incorrect use of prepositions and verbs prevents the response from receiving full credit for grammar. The vocabulary used is appropriate for the context. There are three spelling errors. Although poorly constructed, the response is one complete sentence.

B2 Response

Due to the latest report of IPCC about the wordwide climate, Green House Effect has affected the earth severely on various aspects.

Explanation: The summary does not include any supporting points or key details. A minor grammatical mistake prevents this response from receiving full credit for grammar, although the intended meaning of the sentence is clear. The use of "due to" instead of "according to" makes it seem that the IPCC report caused the greenhouse effect. There is one spelling error. The response is one complete sentence.

C1 Response

A new UN report finds that increasing surface temperatures around the world are causing rising sea levels, shrinking sea ice and snow cover, and changes in precipitation.

Explanation: The topic has been accurately discussed and the supporting points are included. The vocabulary used is precise. All words are spelled correctly. The response is one complete sentence.

Item 2

Read the passage below and summarize it using one sentence. Write your response in the box at the bottom of the page. You have 10 minutes to finish this task. Your response will be judged on the quality of your writing and on how well your response presents the key points in the passage.

For millions of years, Mediterranean sea turtles have been coming to the shore of southern Lebanon to lay their eggs. Every summer, their babies hatch and literally run for their lives on the strip of sand that separates their nests from the sea. An endangered species, they had been largely ignored in this part of Lebanon until two women set out to protect them.

Mona Khalil was inspired by a walk on the beach during a visit to her homeland, when she first saw the turtles. Upon learning that they were close to disappearing from her country, Khalil decided to "come back and do something about them."

The next year, 2000, she returned and teamed up with Habiba Fayed, who shares her passion for the environment. They opened a bed-and-breakfast in the Khalil family home to finance their efforts. Guests could simply vacation or, in the spirit of ecotourism, they could help the owners protect the turtles' nests and keep the beach clean.

Female turtles travel to the exact spot where they were born to dig their nests in the sand, laying an average of 70 to 100 eggs. This is the moment when the women intervene. They protect the nests from predators by burying an iron grid in the sand above the eggs. The spaces on the grid are large enough to allow the baby turtles to emerge after a month and find their way to the sea...and to a chance at life.

Item 2: Sample Responses

Key Points

Thanks to Moan Khalil and Habiba Fayed, the sea turtles in Lebanon have a chance for survival.

B1 Response

For the millions of years the turtles were coming laying their eggs in summer and the babies run seperates their nests, ignoring in war torn until two women set out to protect them and mona khalil saw the turtles and decided to do something so in the end the baby turtle to emerge after a month.

B2 Response

Mediterranean sea turtles which is an endangered species lay their 70 to 100 eggs at the shore of southern Lebanon but now Mona Khalil with her team protecting turtle's egg from dameging or from pradators by buring iron grid in the sand above the nests.

C1 Response

After millions of years of being endangered in war-torn coast of southern Lebanon, Mediterranean sea turtles were finally protected by two women, Mona Khalil and Habiba Fayed, who opened a bed-and-breakfast and with the help of the guests, protected turtles' eggs by burying an iron grid in the sand above the eggs.

Item 2: Sample Responses and Explanations

B1 Response

For the millions of years the turtles were coming laying their eggs in summer and the babies run seperates their nests, ignoring in war torn until two women set out to protect them and mona khalil saw the turtles and decided to do something so in the end the baby turtle to emerge after a month.

Explanation: While the response includes some main points, other key information from the passage is omitted and information not in the passage is present. This response demonstrates limited control over simple grammatical structures. The vocabulary is basic. There is one spelling mistake. The response is one sentence.

B2 Response

Mediterranean sea turtles which is an endangered species lay their 70 to 100 eggs at the shore of southern Lebanon but now Mona Khalil with her team protecting turtle's egg from dameging or from pradators by burying iron grid in the sand above the nests.

Explanation: The topic has been accurately discussed and the supporting points are included. Missing or incorrect use of prepositions and verbs prevents the response from receiving full credit for grammar. The vocabulary used is appropriate for the context. There are three spelling errors. The response is one sentence.

C1 Response

After millions of years of being endangered in war-torn coast of southern Lebanon, Mediterranean sea turtles were finally protected by two women, Mona Khalil and Habiba Fayed, who opened a bed-and-breakfast and with the help of the guests, protected turtles' eggs by burying an iron grid in the sand above the eggs.

Explanation: The topic has been accurately discussed and the supporting points are included. This response demonstrates good control of standard English grammar with very few grammatical errors. The vocabulary used is appropriate for the context. All words are spelled correctly. The response is one sentence.