

## Card Pyramid – A Scaffolding Strategy for Summarizing

### CARD PYRAMID

I first learned this research-based strategy when it was modeled in a 2011 workshop sponsored by the Neuhaus Center, in Austin TX. It's used to teach students how to summarize orally before they begin to write a summary. Numbered index cards are used to pull out key details from a text. The order of the cards links each subtopic with supporting details. Once cards have been created, students take turns orally summarizing key ideas with a partner before writing their summaries. The strategy can be adapted for note taking as well as summarizing ideas based on paragraphs in short texts or subtopics in longer texts. Teachers should decide how best to "chunk" the text.

#### An example of modeling how to build a card pyramid:

1. The teacher reads a short text aloud as students follow along.
2. The teacher asks questions after reading each part of the text together and models filling in index cards with main idea or topic (card #1), first key idea or subtopic (card #2), supporting details for the first key idea (card #3), and so on.
  - **"What is this text about?"** The teacher writes the topic on card #1, placing it at the top of the pyramid.
  - **"What interesting fact is in the introduction? Let's read it again silently."** The teacher adds an interesting fact suggested by students to card #1.
  - **"What key idea is the first paragraph/subtopic talking about?"** (Discuss and fill in card #2.)
  - **"What are some supporting details in this section? Are there descriptive words or examples?"** Complete brief notes and place card #3 under card #2.
  - **"What new information is in the next section?"** The teacher adds notes from the second subtopic on card #4 and places card #4 under card #1 and to the right of card #2.
  - **"What are some supporting details in this section?"** Discuss, take brief notes, and place card #5 under card #4.
3. Continue the same way with other sections of the text, adding numbered cards.
4. Finally, discuss what might go at the end – the author's conclusion? Or perhaps a connection beyond this text: text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world.
5. The teacher then says, **"Let's ORALLY summarize the passage. We'll start with card 1, 2, 3, etc. and see if we can recall all of the information."** Oral summarizing can be done again in pairs, using the numbered cards. This repetition reinforces the underlying text structure and transitions and involves EVERY student.
6. The teacher asks, **"If I wanted to write a summary about this topic, how could I use some of this information on the cards? Should I use all of this information? How would I decide what information to use?"** Discuss how they have been selecting information to support a focus and how all of the facts might be too much to include in a summary. Also identify any facts that may need some elaboration for clarity.

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<b>Card Pyramid: Planning for Writing a Summary or Précis</b>			
<b>Text/ Title:</b> <b>1 main idea/topic:</b>  <b>Interesting fact about the topic (“the grabber”):</b>			
<b>2 First key idea/Subtopic</b>	<b>4 Next key idea/ Subtopic</b>	<b>6 Next key idea/Subtopic</b>	<b>8 Last idea/ Subtopic</b>
<b>3 details, facts, examples that support the idea above</b>	<b>5 details, facts, examples that support the idea above</b>	<b>7 details, facts, examples that support the idea above</b>	<b>9 details, facts, examples that support the idea above</b>
<b>Which details will I elaborate on?</b> Cross out details that will NOT be used in my written summary.	<b>Which details will I elaborate on?</b> Cross out details that will NOT be used in my written summary.	<b>Which details will I elaborate on?</b> Cross out details that will NOT be used in my written summary.	<b>Which details will I elaborate on?</b> Cross out details that will NOT be used in my written summary.
<b>10 Conclusions and Connections</b>			