1. Read the explanation of summary writing as a reading strategy.

2. After you read, answer the following questions:
   
   1. What is a summary?
   
   2. How long should a summary be?
   
   3. Why should you evaluate your purpose before writing a summary?
   
   4. How does the pattern of organization help in writing a summary?
   
   5. What is the format for a summary?

3. On a separate piece of paper, summarize the essay “Sports: Illustrating the Three Perspectives” from the college textbook, *Sociology: A Brief Introduction* (Allyn and Bacon) included in this packet.

4. Ask an instructor or paraprofessional for the answers that accompany this activity. Check your answers to the questions above. Then, compare your summary to the sample provided with this packet.

5. Summarize a reading assignment for one of your classes. Review your work with an instructor or paraprofessional in the Reading Lab.
Riverside Community College  
Directed Learning Activity  
Reading Strategy-Summary Writing

A summary is the reduction of a large amount of information to its most important points. To write a summary, the reader is required to read carefully and to identify the author’s main ideas of a text. A well-written summary is an effective way to improve comprehension since the reader is required to interact with the material on a deeper level. Summary writing can also be used to create a study guide in preparation for a test.

Characteristics of Summaries:
- Summaries identify the author and title of the original text.
- Summaries demonstrate understanding of the author’s main ideas.
- Summaries are much shorter than the original text, since they omit most minor details.
- Summaries do not include your opinions or interpretations.
- Summaries are written in your own words unless you are quoting the author or writing definitions from a textbook.

Guidelines to Writing Summaries:
- **Length**: A summary consists of the main idea and major supporting details. As a general guide, each paragraph can be reduced to 1-2 sentences.
  *To summarize a paragraph, locate the topic sentence and major details.
  *To summarize an essay, locate the thesis statement and topic sentences.
  *To summarize a textbook chapter, use the headers, sub-headers, and words in bold to signal important ideas.

- **Purpose**: The length of a summary will depend on your purpose. If you are writing a summary to study for a test, your summary will be more detailed and include textbook examples. If you are summarizing an article for an English class to help you remember what you read, your summary will briefly highlight the main points.

- **Patterns of Organization**: Use the same organizational structure of the original text. If your textbook is listing a number of theories, then your summary will also be a list. If you’re reading a novel, your summary will narrate a series of events.

- **Plan it out**: You may find it helpful to write a brief outline or draw a map before writing the summary. Organize the main idea and major details. Avoid including insignificant minor details.

- **Format**: Write the summary in complete sentences in paragraph format. Your first sentence should state the author, title, and main idea of the entire text. Then, list the supporting details using transitions to signal your major points.

Rea 82-SLO#9
“Sports: Illustrating the Three Perspectives” by Alex Thio

Adapted from Sociology: A Brief Introduction (Allyn and Bacon)

The influence of sports reaches far and wide. Sports are particularly popular in the leisure-oriented American society. Most of us have had some experience with athletics as participants or spectators. Schools, from elementary to college, provide many sports opportunities. Many newspapers carry more news about sports than about politics, the economy, crime, or practically any other event. Radio and television newscasts rarely go on the air without a sports report. Football, basketball, baseball, and other games are often broadcast in their entirety, preempting regular programming. Sports exert so much influence on our lives that our everyday speech is full of sports imagery: “struck out,” “touch base,” “ballpark figure,” “game plan,” “teamwork,” “cheap shot,” “go all the way,” and so on.

What, then, is the nature of this powerful aspect of our lives? From the three sociological perspectives, we can see that sports are beneficial to society in some ways, harmful in other ways, and like any other social interaction, governed by individuals’ definitions of each other's action.

SPORTS AS BENEFICIAL TO SOCIETY

According to the functionalist perspective, sports contribute to the welfare of society by performing at least three major functions.

First, sports are conducive to success in other areas of life. Being competitive, sports inspire athletes to do their utmost to win, thereby helping them to develop such qualities as skill and ability, diligence and self-discipline, mental alertness and physical fitness. These qualities can ensure success in the larger society. By watching athletes perform, spectators also learn the importance of hard work, playing by the rules, and working as a team player, characteristics that help ensure success in a career and other aspects of life.

Second, sports enhance health and happiness. Participants can enjoy a healthy, long life. The health benefit is more than physical; it is also psychological. Runners and joggers, for example, often find that their activity releases tension and anger as well as relieves anxiety and depression. Moreover, many people derive much pleasure from looking on their participation as a form of beauty, and artistic expression, or way of having a good time with friends. Similarly, sports improve the quality of life for the spectators. Fans can escape humdrum daily routines or find pleasure in filling their leisure time, as many American do when watching baseball, long known as the national pastime. They can savor the aesthetic pleasure of watching the excellence, beauty, and creativity in an athlete's performance. The fans can therefore attain greater happiness, life satisfaction, or psychological well-being.

Third, sports contribute to social order, and stability by serving as an integrating force for society as a whole. Sports are, in effect, a social mechanism for uniting potentially disunited members of society. Through their common interest in a famous athlete or team, people of
diverse racial social and cultural backgrounds can feel a sense of homogeneity, community of intimacy that they can acquire in no other way. Athletes, too, can identify with their fans, their community, and their country.

SPORTS AS HARMFUL TO SOCIETY

According to the conflict perspective, sports harm society by serving the interests of the relatively powerful over those of the powerless in at least two ways.

First, sports tend to act as an opiate, numbing the masses' sense of dissatisfaction with capitalist society. Involvement in sports as spectators tends to distract low-paid or unemployed workers from their tedious and dehumanizing jobs or frustrating joblessness. To divert their citizens' attention from their miserable lives, governments of many poor countries also seize any opportunity that arises to whip up the masses into a frenzy of patriotic support for their teams. Such a nationalistic frenzy can be carried to extremes, as it was in 1969 when Honduras and El Salvador went to war against each other after a World Cup soccer match. All this serves to maintain the capitalist system by which the rich and powerful exploit the masses.

Second, sports reinforce social, gender, and racial inequalities in society. With regard to social inequality, the overemphasis on competition and winning has caused the loss of something all participants can enjoy equally—namely, the original elements of play and fun in sporting activities. This has turned many people into "couch potatoes," who spend more time watching than playing sports. Sports, then have become big business, with powerful owners of professional teams exploiting the public and government. Aside from making enormous sums of money from the fans team owners receive many tax breaks while enjoying the enviable position of being the only self-regulated (in effect, unregulated) monopoly in the nation.

It is true that over the last two decades, sports participation among women has risen sharply, thanks to the women's liberation movement and the 1972 law that prohibits sex discrimination in school sports. Nevertheless, in most colleges and universities, more funds continue to be spent on men's sports especially football and basketball, than on women's athletic programs. Because of gender bias, men are even more likely than women to get top management and coaching jobs in women's programs. The sports arena is still considered a "man's world" in which women's leadership skills are devalued. Even the skills of super women athletes are discounted by the media, which often describe female athletes as "pretty," "slim," "attractive," "gracious," and "lovely," as opposed to male athletes who are "brilliant," "cool," "courageous," "great," and "tough."

On the surface, the large number of remarkably successful African American athletes in basketball and football today may cast doubt on the existence of racial inequality in sports. But, African Americans do suffer from racism in some ways as indicated by the virtual absence of blacks in top positions as owners, managers, and coaches of professional teams.

Far more significantly, however, sports may help perpetuate the relatively high rate of poverty among African Americans. Traditionally, severe, widespread job discrimination has caused many poor African American youths to work extremely hard to develop athletic skills in order to make it in college and professional sports, which explains why most of the best athletes in the country are African American. Today, the enormous attention given by the white dominated media to African American superstars further encourages many poor African American youths to give their all to athletics. But this intense concentration on sports has diverted attention from academic work. This is tragic because, given the same hard work; it is
far easier to become a professional in business, government, education, or any other field. The chances of becoming a professional athlete are extremely small.

SPORTS AS SYMBOLIC INTERACTION

While the functionalist and conflict perspectives focus on the larger societal issues of sports that affect most people, symbolic interactionism hones in on the smaller, immediate issue of how athletes—or other individuals involved in a sport, such as coaches and fans—behave. According to this third perspective, if we define a situation as real, it is real in its consequences. Thus, if athletes define a game as one that they will win, they will likely win it. This may explain why Tiger Woods is currently the world’s greatest golfer. After watching many golfers being interviewed on TV, hockey legend Wayne Gretzky had this observation: “Most golfers can’t believe they won. Tiger sounds like he expected to win or can’t believe he didn’t.” Let’s take a close look at how definition influences performance.

Great coaches know that they can get their athletes to perform well by drumming certain ideas into their heads. Foremost is the idea that the players are winners, so that they will think only of winning and never about the possibility of losing. Chances are high that they indeed will win because the image of themselves as winners will force them to concentrate only on to he moves that ensure winning. This basically is the technique Jack Nicklaus, perhaps the greater golfer of the past several decades, used to enhance his performance. Before every shot, he formed a mental picture in which he saw three things: (1) the target area the ball would land in, (2) the flight path of the ball to the target area, and (3) himself using the appropriate wing for that particular shot. In short, if athletes define themselves as winners, they are more likely to win. By the same token, if athletes define themselves as losers, they will very likely lose.

Whatever the content of self-definition, it does not necessarily come from within the person. It is more likely to originate from social interaction. Children under age 10, for example, often evaluate how good or bad they are at a sport based on what their significant others (parents, teachers, or coaches) say to them. Thus, children describe themselves in ways such as “I know I am a good runner because my mom says I am” and “I don’t think that I’m a very good soccer player because my coach is always yelling at me.”

Indeed, how others see us when they interact with us can help how we define ourselves. But just as we often define our self-definition from our social environment, others also develop their image of us from their environment. In interacting with an African American athlete, for example, a coach tends to stereotype the athlete as naturally gifted in sports. This stereotype, part of the popular belief about African Americans in U.S. society, has a significant impact on the coach’s interaction with the African American athlete. Most commonly, the coach will impose a higher standard of performance on an African American athlete than on a white athlete. And the African American athlete will be forced to work harder to achieve that high standard, which may partly explain why African American athletes usually outshine their white peers on the same team. Similarly, gender bias in the larger society had often led parents and teachers to discourage young women from playing basketball, soccer, and other so-called male sports, defining women who want to compete in these games as unfeminine. As a result, many women have responded by avoiding these sports and choosing the so-called female sport, such as aerobic dancing, swimming, gymnastics, and tennis. The popular definition of some sports as masculine and others as feminine can also influence the spectators. Masculine sports, for example, are more likely to cause fan violence than are feminine sports, such as gymnastics and swimming.