

3

Writing a summary

The task and what you're expected to do

Writing a summary, i. e. rephrasing **briefly** an author's main ideas (in non-fictional texts) **or** retelling a story (in a fictional text) in your own words is often part of a test. You may also have to summarise a German text in English, in the form of mediation.

This means you are expected to

- **sum up** the key arguments of a text.
- **outline** the main aspects in a condensed form, omitting details and examples.
- **summarise** a German text in English (mediation)

Grammar focus

If you want to write a good summary, you will have to know the correct use of ...

- **conjunctions**
- **participles used as adjectives**
- **participle, gerund and infinitive constructions**

If you need to revise these grammar points, you can refer to our summary chapter *Grammar at a glance* (from pages 144, 134 and 132)

If you're feeling ready for the challenge, you can go straight to the summary in 3.1. to find out the grammar rules yourself and practise these points by working with the sample text.

Here is a good example of a summary.

3.1 Summarising a text – an example

First read this newspaper article by Wolf Walker, May 2019.

Curb air pollution

Before Alexander Gerst, who is not only an astronaut but a scientist as well, returned to earth in December 2018, he sent an emotional message to his future grandchildren about the state of our world. Amongst other things he said:

“But in reality, we humans know that right now we’re polluting the planet with carbon dioxide, we’re making the climate reach the tipping point, we’re clearing forests, we’re polluting the oceans with garbage, we’re consuming the limited resources far too quickly, and we’re waging mostly pointless wars. And every one of us has to take a good look at himself and herself and think about where this is leading. I very much hope for our own sake that we can still “get our act together” and improve a few things. And I hope that we won’t be remembered by you as the generation that selfishly and ruthlessly destroyed your livelihood.”*

The Chinese are deeply concerned since air pollution has been a serious problem in their big cities for years and years. Zhang Wei, working for a huge telecommunication company in Beijing, said, “Could you imagine living in a metropolis like Beijing with its immense air pollution?” He added, “And sometimes we can’t stand being exposed to all that smog. It’s terrible, really appalling. On some days we don’t know what to do. Some people are seriously thinking about moving to the country.”

Cars, buses and trucks contribute to the high emissions in Chinese urban areas. In 2017 coal accounted for about 60 per cent of the nation’s energy consumption. Northern China is still the home of the largest concentration of coal-fired power plants in the world. That’s the reason why coal is considered to be the main “cause” of air pollution. The impact on people’s health is alarming. Children permanently exposed to pollutants suffer from asthma and respiratory illnesses. Reports show that cancer, heart diseases and strokes can clearly be traced back to the massive pollution in the air. Researchers argue that if the cities concerned had met the regulations for “a better air” more consequently, more than 25,000 lives could have been saved.

An estimated 160,000 deaths were avoided in 2017 due to the change in PM 2.5 levels*.

The problem is too complicated to be solved within a couple of years. However, there is some good news. China has decided to shift from coal power to renewable energy. However, some Chinese, who can’t afford to pay the high electricity costs, still secretly burn coal for heating and cooking.

30	Recently an Action Plan for the Prevention of Air Pollution was implemented in Beijing, Tianjin and 26 nearby cities which brought further huge improvements in air quality towards the end of 2017. In Beijing the amount of pollution fell by 54% in the last three months of the year.
	Knowing that there is an urgent need to continue the transition away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy sources, experts don't get tired of emphasising that each country should
35	strictly observe the standard regulations to avoid emissions. "It's really worth doing something for our present and for our future generation as well – thinking about doing something is not enough. Our fear of getting seriously ill one day is really justified, I think," said Zhang Wei.
	<i>*„Botschaft an meine Enkelkinder.“ von Alexander Gerst, veröffentlicht am 18.12.2018</i>
	PM 2.5 - fine particulate matter (Feinstaub)

Now read the following summary of the main ideas of the article. If you have to summarise a text yourself, you should use the key arguments of a text and present the main points in a condensed form. Omit details and examples.

	Summary
	In his article "Curb air pollution" published in May 2019, author Wolf Walker deals with the serious problem of air pollution. He opens his article quoting the German astronaut Alexander Gerst's moving message to future generations from December 2018, expressing his hope that selfishness will be overcome and things concerning pollution will be improved. He moves on
5	to the situation in China today where the heavy traffic in cities has caused high emissions for years endangering the health of the people living there. But the main reason for the pollution is – according to the author – the increasing and meanwhile exorbitant use of coal as China's main energy. He points out that the concentration of coal-fired power plants is denser nowhere than in Northern China.
10	The author shows how dramatic the consequences of air pollution are for people's health, and he argues that if China had better complied with the regulations, thousands of people would not have suffered from severe diseases, and many people would still be alive.
	The article ends with a positive perspective. After China put forward a promising plan to change its environmental policy by replacing coal with renewable energy, first improvements
15	could be seen so that these measures appear to be successful in China's big cities.
	At the end, Walker points out that renewable energies will only be successful if all countries in the world do something to stop emissions to improve people's health.

3.2 Grammar detective

3.2.1 Conjunctions

Read the summary carefully. Then highlight all conjunctions in yellow.

3.2.2 Participles used as adjectives

Now find present or past participles used as adjectives in the summary. Write them on the lines below.

.....

.....

3.2.3 Present and past participles instead of relative clauses

Read these shortened relative clauses taken from the article. Rewrite them using relative pronouns on an extra piece of paper. Then complete the general rules using the words from the box.

passive voice | past participle | present participle

line 12 Zhang Wei, working for a huge telecommunication company ...

You can shorten relative clauses by using constructions.

line 23 ... if the cities concerned had met the regulations ...

line 21 Children permanently exposed to pollutants suffer from ...

You can shorten relative clauses in the by using constructions.

3.2.4 Participle constructions instead of adverbial clauses

Read this shortened adverbial clause taken from the article. Rewrite it using subordinate conjunctions like since, as or because. Write on an extra piece of paper.

lines 33-34 Knowing that there is an urgent need to continue the transition away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy sources, experts don't get tired of emphasising

You can shorten adverbial clauses by using participle or gerund constructions.

3.2.5 Gerund or infinitive constructions

A Now look at the last paragraph of the article (lines 33-37 "Knowing that there ... said Zhang Wei."). Find all gerund constructions and highlight them in red. Then complete the rule below.

You use gerund constructions after certain

.....

B Find infinitive constructions in the summary. Highlight them in blue. Then complete the rules below.

You use object + infinitive after verbs like:

Other verbs followed by an infinitive are for instance:

3.3 Grammar practice

3.3.1 Conjunctions

although | and | as soon as | both | but | but
also | either | even | for | neither | nor | not
only | or | so | unless | whether | yet

A Use coordinating conjunctions from the box above to fill the gaps.

International Conference on Marine Biology in Dubai, 2018

Some participants said:

- 1 We wanted to meet some leading academic scientists, many of them were too busy.
- 2 Unfortunately there weren't enough taxis, we had to take a bus.
- 3 Some scientists didn't speak much English they seemed to understand what we said.
- 4 Stephanie Hollanda was there too. I didn't know her I had never read an article by her before.

B Use correlative conjunctions from the box above to fill the gaps.

- 1 Some scientists could speak English Chinese fluently.
- 2 Prof J. was the kind of person you love hate.
- 3 Spain Italy had sent scientists to Dubai.
- 4 One US scientist was a marine biologist an astronaut.

C Use subordinating conjunctions from the box above to fill the gaps.

- 1 I have the greatest respect for the scientists' ideas, I don't always agree with them.
- 2 Prof. J. had finished his lecture, he left the conference.
- 3 if you try, you don't understand everything they lecture.
- 4 Scientists need to consider the disadvantages of their projects outweigh the advantages.
- 5 some extra money is raised, some projects will be stopped.

3.3.2 Participles used as adjectives

Use the present or past participle of the verbs given to form the missing adjectives.

- 1 (frustrate) – The new film about plastic waste in the ocean is really
- 2 (shock) – The cinema-goers were deeply about the present situation in the oceans.
- 3 (depress) – They felt so that they decided to call for demonstrations.
- 4 (embarrass) – The photos of dying aquatic animals are really
- 5 (interest) – There's a talk on this topic next Friday evening – are you?

3.3.3 Present and past participles instead of relative clauses

Shorten these relative clauses by using present or past participles. Write on an extra piece of paper.

Waste crime

- 1 "Look out of my window," said Rose Green. "I hope the men who are being questioned by the local police will have to pay a huge fine."
- 2 "It had been a nightmare. Sometimes they started at 6 a.m. on a Sunday. There was a crane which towered over our house and there were two huge containers which were constantly being dragged from one part of the yard to the other."
- 3 "The noise was indescribable. Old cars, which were torn apart by huge machines, were dropped onto a mountain of metal which was far higher than our house."
- 4 Waste crime is a relatively recent but nasty business: nasty for the environment, for the people affected, and for legitimate companies that pay for waste-disposal licences.
- 5 There was the news on TV which showed that the two men, who were arrested yesterday, have a long history in the illegal waste business.

3.3.4 Participle constructions instead of adverbial clauses

Use participle or gerund constructions instead of adverbial clauses. Write on an extra piece of paper.

Joe Ruxton was working for WWF first. J gave an interview:

- 1 Although Hong Kong knew the unique nursery grounds of dolphins very well, they built their new airport right in them.
- 2 After J had worked for the WWF in Asia for seven years, J joined the BBC Natural History Unit as a producer.
- 3 When J found out more and more about the tragedy of the dying oceans, J became aware it was a much bigger problem than she had originally thought.
- 4 As J had spent several months planning the project, J became more and more enthusiastic about it.
- 5 J didn't give up the project because of a low budget. She began to look for sponsors.

3.3.5 Gerund or infinitive constructions

Use gerund or infinitive constructions. You may need an appropriate preposition in connection with a gerund.

A week on a research boat

Before we started our tour, S.Z, a marine biologist, said to me: "Don't forget (take) a camera with you.

On day three I was shocked. I will never forget (stand) on the boat, (see) so much plastic waste. S.Z said on the fourth day of our trip, "Sorry, but I regret (not, advise) you before our trip that teenagers under 18 are not allowed to dive." Instead (be) disappointed, I decided (stay) on board since I wanted (learn) more about the pollution of the oceans. Later on that day S.Z. added, "I want you (help) us."

At the end of the week the weather got really bad and we all hoped (return) home safely, some even feared the danger (get) lost in the wide ocean. After our return to the
 10 harbour we were all looking forward (meet) our friends again. In conclusion I can say that we all learned that the problems with pollution are too complicated (deal with) by a small group of people, but every little bit helps.

3.4 Error spotting

- A** Read this speech by the Irish environmentalist Janet P. given in Dublin at a conference in July 2019. Mark all words and phrases that need to be corrected.

	Ladies and gentlemen, dear students and friends,
	Thank you to have given me the opportunity to deliver a speech about one of the most
	frightened topics of today, "Pollution of air and water."
	Nothing worries me as much as this topic and I'm quite sure each one of you shares my option
5	when I say "Let's do something about this at once."
	You know, to save our environment doesn't just mean to protect our rivers and forests. I think it's
	a bigger challenge. Perhaps you've heard what the German astronaut Alexander Gerst said before
	he returned to earth.
	"This fragile spaceship called Earth is much smaller then most people can imagine; look how
10	fragile the Earth's biosphere is and how limited its resources are.
	I'm really shocking to see that almost no part on our Earth is left unaffected by us any more.
	Natural resources are exploited everyday. The land where we live and work, the water that
	surrounds us, the wildlife, the species, they are all in danger to be ruined for ever. Every hour,
	every minute, poisonous chemicals are released into rivers and oceans, dangerous fumes are
15	emitted by millions of vehicles, tons of waste are produced and disposed of in an outrageous
	way. Our Earth is the main source to live as we get food, water and air from the environment. We
	can truly say that it is our environment that enables
	us to live. In spite we know the consequences, we
	carelessly go on disturbing the ecological balance
20	from our environment
	That's why it's such a positive development that
	schoolchildren across the world have begun to join
	the Fridays for Future protests, demanding that
	global leaders take action on climate change. The
25	movement, started by 16-year-old Swede Greta Thunberg, is expected to see children, their
	parents and their supporters taken to the streets in 1,500 cities in more than 100 countries.
	Their demands are clear: more regenerative, re-usable and recyclable techniques have to be
	used. I think they are quite right: Let's start with small actions like to use paper bags instead of
	plastic bags, to recycle waste products, to use public transport and bikes for short distances,
30	and not to waste energy at home or in the office etc.



Know that we are ruining our surroundings not only for us, but for our future generation also, we need being more cautious and have control of our actions. I myself dream to live on our earth where most pollution will have been reduced to zero in 20 years. I hope it won't remain a dream. Thank you for your kind attention.

B Now read the summary of the speech. Highlight the wrong information. There are **ten** mistakes.

Summary

At a conference held in Dublin in June 2019 the Irish politician Janet P. held a speech on "Pollution of air and water." At the beginning she emphasised the local importance of the protection of our planet which – according to her – mustn't be put off until some future time.

In the first part of her speech she drew the listeners' attention to the fact that up to the present
5 day mankind has affected some parts of our planet. She alluded to the fact that mankind exploits natural resources and destroys the habitat of animals. In addition, toxic radiations endanger our food, water and air, all elements we are dependent on. She complained about mankind's thoughtless attitude towards our environment.

In the second part she stated that there are some positive signs for the future though. She
10 mentioned the *Fridays for Future protests* which attract hundreds of people every day. The protesters, she told the audience, simply required global pioneers to do something against the climate change by using less regenerative, re-usable and recyclable methods. Janet P. encouraged everyone to do something in his or her own "little" world.

She finished her speech with her hope that in 10 years' time pollution might have been reduced
15 to zero – which would be a blessing for us and the next generation.

3.5 Style and phrases

Summarising a text mostly follows five steps. Always try to convey the main idea of the original text clearly and concisely. Your summary should therefore "condense" a lot of information.

1 Step 1: Preparing your summary

- Try to divide the text into sub-headings. If possible, insert slashes: /
- Try to find out what kind of text you are dealing with.
- Skim the original text.

2 Step 2: Understanding

- If necessary, use a dictionary to look up unknown words.
- Make sure you understand the overall meaning of the text. (Think of the question words: who? where? when? why? what? how?)
- Now read the original text thoroughly.

3 Step 3: Note-taking

- Take some notes. Write the notes in your own words, on the side of the page or on another piece of paper.
- Now highlight the most important parts / information.

4 Step 4: Writing

Introduction

- A summary begins with an introductory sentence which states the title of the text, the author and the main point of the text.

The summary

- In your own words, write down the main points of each section. Be sure you don't write the same words, phrases or structures as the original. Use alternative verbs such as those in the list. Write a last sentence that "wraps" up your summary; it can be a simple rephrasing of the main point.
- Do not include minor details.
- Think of the **grammar aspects** of your text:
 - Link the key words / phrases by using adequate conjunctions.
 - Try to shorten relative clauses by using present and past participle constructions.
 - Shorten adverbial clauses by using participle or gerund constructions.
 - Don't forget to use gerund constructions after certain verbs, nouns or adjectives + prepositions.

Conclusion

- There is no conclusion at the end of a summary.
- A summary contains only the ideas of the original text. **Do not insert** any of your own **opinions, interpretations, or comments.**

The author ...
argues, analyses, comments,
creates the impression,
discusses,
emphasises, explains, implies,
insists, points out, proves,
shows, suggests, states, etc.

5 Step 5: Proofreading

- Go through the writing process again; make changes where appropriate or necessary.

Text detective

- A** Read the summary in 3.1 again and look at its structure. Find the text parts: introduction, summary, conclusion.

3.6 Over to you: Mediation

Verwenden Sie die Informationen aus dem nachstehenden Zeitungsartikel und verfassen Sie einen englischen Text, indem Sie die wichtigsten Gesichtspunkte zusammengefasst darstellen.

Schreiben Sie ca. 250 Wörter.

Dicke Luft im Kindergarten

London will die Kleinen mit Filtern vor Abgasen schützen

- Spielen im Kindergarten gefährdet die Gesundheit - zumindest wenn sich dieser in der Nähe einer belebten Straße befindet. Denn dann atmen die Kleinen tagein, tagaus mit Autoabgasen geschwängerte Luft ein. Zu den Städten Europas mit der dreckigsten Luft gehört London. Die Stadtverwaltung dort will die Kinder nun mit Luftfiltern schützen. Im Frühjahr beginnt ein Modellversuch, bei dem die Apparate in fünf staatlichen Kindergärten installiert werden. Wissenschaftler prüfen, wie sehr dies die Luftqualität verbessert. In 15 weiteren Einrichtungen lässt die Verwaltung andere Ansätze untersuchen. Da werden etwa Spielplätze verlegt, Hecken gepflanzt oder Straßen zeitweise gesperrt.
- Bürgermeister Sadiq Khan, selbst Asthmatiker, nennt es beschämend, dass „Londons giftige Luft“ Kindern schade. Eine vom Rathaus in Auftrag gegebene Studie ergab, dass die Feinstaub-Belastung in den Klassenzimmern mancher Schulen Grenzwerte überschreitet, welche die Weltgesundheitsorganisation empfiehlt. Zudem inhalieren die Kinder viel Stickoxide. Ein großer Teil des Feinstaubs und der Stickoxide stammt von Dieselaautos. Der Untersuchung zufolge leiden Kinder überdurchschnittlich oft an Asthma, wenn sich Wohnung oder Schule in der Nähe von Straßen mit viel Verkehr befinden.
- Klagen über die miese Luft sind nicht neu. Und früher war das Problem noch schlimmer: Der ständige Londoner Nebel, berühmt gemacht in Deutschland durch die Edgar-Wallace-Filme, war schlicht ein Anzeichen von Smog. Im Dezember 1952 war die Verschmutzung an einigen windstillen Tagen besonders übel. Dieser *Great Smog of London* soll zum Tod von geschätzt 12 000 Einwohnern beigetragen haben. Danach verbesserten schärfere Gesetze und der Kollaps der Industrie die Luftqualität.
- Trotzdem reißt die 8,8-Millionen-Stadt regelmäßig die EU-Grenzwerte. An der bei Touristen so beliebten Einkaufshölle Oxford Circus maßen Forscher einmal eine schlimmere Stickoxid-Belastung als in der Smog-Kapitale Peking. Schuld sind Busse, Lieferwagen und Autos, die im Dauerstau durch die engen Straßen kriechen.
- Der sozialdemokratische Bürgermeister Khan investiert daher mehr in Busse mit Elektro- und Hybridantrieb. Seit Anfang 2018 werden auch nur noch Taxen neu zugelassen, die elektrisch herumsummen können: Die berühmten Black Cabs werden grün. Und bald soll eine Abgabe Autos mit besonders schlechten Abgaswerten aus der Innenstadt heraushalten. Wer ins Zentrum fährt, muss ohnehin werktags eine Citymaut von 11,50 Pfund zahlen. Kameras erfassen die Nummernschilder; eine Software prüft, ob überwiesen wurde. Von April an müssen Besitzer alter, schmutziger Modelle zusätzlich 12,50 Pfund pro Tag berappen, fast 14 Euro, und das selbst an Wochenenden. Betroffen sind vor 2015 zugelassene Dieselaautos und vor 2006 registrierte Benziner. Die Verkehrsbehörde schätzt, die Abgabe könnte 2,5 Millionen Mal pro Jahr fällig werden. In zwei Jahren soll der erfasste Bereich deutlich ausgeweitet werden.
- Die konservative Opposition im Stadtrat klagt, dass die teure Abgabe vor allem Arme treffen werde, die sich keine neueren Autos leisten können. Saubere Luft hat ihren Preis.

Björn Finke, Süddeutsche Zeitung vom 09.01.2019

3.7 Solutions

Grammar detective

3.2.1 Conjunctions

line 6	But	line 12	and
line 8	that	line 15	so that
line 10	and	line 16	that, if
line 11	that if		

3.2.2 Participles used as adjectives

(line 3) moving | (line 7) increasing | (line 8) coal-fired | (line 13) promising

3.2.3 Present and past participles instead of relative clauses

line 12 Zhang Wei **who works** for a ...
 You can shorten relative clauses by using **present participle** constructions.
 line 23 the cities **which/that are** concerned ...
 line 21 children **who/that are** permanently exposed to ...
 You can shorten relative clauses in the **passive voice** by using **past participle** constructions.

3.2.4 Participle constructions instead of adverbial clauses

Since/as/because experts know that there is ..., they don't get tired to emphasise ...
 You can shorten adverbial clauses by using participle or gerund constructions.

3.2.5 Gerund or infinitive constructions

Task A

line 34	tired of emphasising	line 36	thinking about doing
line 35	worth doing	line 37	Our fear of getting

You use gerund constructions after certain **verbs, nouns, or adjectives + prepositions**.

Task B

lines 13-14	to change	line 17	to stop, to improve
line 15	to be		

You use object + infinitive after verbs like: **do something / to stop sth**.
 Other verbs followed by an infinitive are for instance: **to plan / to appear**.

Grammar practice

3.3.1 Conjunctions

Task A

- 1 We wanted to meet some leading academic scientists, **but** many of them were too busy.
- 2 Unfortunately there weren't enough taxis, **so** we had to take a bus.
- 3 Some scientists didn't speak much English **yet** they seemed to understand what we said.
- 4 Stephanie Hollanda was there too. I didn't know her **for** I had never read an article by her before.

Task B

- 1 Some scientists could speak **both** English **and** Chinese fluently.
- 2 Prof J. was the kind of person you **either** love **or** hate.
- 3 **Neither** Spain **nor** Italy had sent scientists to Dubai.
- 4 One US scientist was **not only** a marine biologist but **also** an astronaut.

Task C

- 1 I have the greatest respect for the scientists' ideas, **although** I don't always agree with them.
- 2 **As soon as** Prof. J. had finished his lecture, he left the conference.
- 3 **Even** if you try, you don't understand everything they lecture.
- 4 Scientists need to consider **whether** the disadvantages of their projects outweigh the advantages.
- 5 **Unless** some extra money is raised, some projects will be stopped.

3.3.2 Participles used as adjectives

- 1 The new film about plastic waste in the ocean is really **frustrating**.
- 2 The cinema-goers were deeply **shocked** about the present situation in the oceans.
- 3 They felt so **depressed** that they decided to call for demonstrations.
- 4 The photos of dying aquatic animals are really **embarrassing**.
- 5 There's a talk on this topic next Friday evening – are you **interested**?

3.3.3 Present and past participles instead of relative clauses

- 1 I hope the men **being questioned** by the local police ...
- 2 There was a crane **towering** our house ... containers constantly **being dragged** from one part ...
- 3 The noise was indescribable. Old cars **torn** apart by ... **being higher than** ...
- 4 ... and for legitimate companies **paying** for waste-disposal ...
- 5 There was the news on TV **showing** that the two men **arrested** yesterday ...

3.3.4 Participle constructions instead of adverbial clauses

- 1 **Knowing / In spite of knowing** the unique dolphin nursery grounds very well, **Hong Kong** built ...
- 2 **After having worked** for the WWF in Asia for seven years, **I** joined ...
- 3 **After finding out** more and more about the tragedy of the dying oceans, **I** became aware ...
- 4 **Having spent** several months planning the project, **I** became ...
- 5 **Instead of giving up** the project because of a low budget; **I** began ...

3.3.5 Gerund or infinitive constructions

line 1	to take	line 7	to help
line 3	standing, seeing	line 8	to return
line 4	not having advised	line 9	of getting
line 5	of being	line 10	to meeting
line 6	to stay, to learn	line 11	to be dealt with

Error spotting

line 2	for having given	line 20	of
line 3	frightening	line 26	take
line 4	opinion	line 28	using
line 6	saving, protecting	line 29	recycling, using
line 9	than	line 30	not wasting
line 11	shocked	line 31	Knowing, as well
line 13	of being ruined	line 32	to be, of living
line 16	of living	line 33	20 years' time
line 18	of knowing		

Summary

line 1	July, environmentalist	line 10	thousands, day
line 2	global	line 11	leaders
line 5	nearly each	line 12	more
line 6	emissions	line 14	20

Text detective**Task A**

lines 1-2 introduction | lines 2-15 the summary | there is no conclusion at the end of a summary.