



## **Classroom Assessment Techniques: One-Sentence Summary**

*One-Sentence Summary* is a technique that requires students to synthesize information into a single sentence. The technique is simple, but requires much on the part of students who are asked to consider:

Who or what?  
Does what?  
To what or whom?  
When?  
Where?  
How?  
Why?

Students are then required to convert this information to sentence form.

*One-Sentence Summary* gives students practice in “chunking” information and provides instructors the opportunity to scan and compare responses quickly. It is applicable to nearly any information that can be represented in declarative form—such as historical events, plot lines, political events, chemical reactions, and mechanical processes.

### **When implementing *One-Sentence Summary*, consider the following:**

1. Select an important topic that your students have recently studied in your course and that you expect them to be able to summarize.
2. Ask students to work as quickly as they can to answer the questions “Who Did or Does What to Whom, When, Where, How, and Why?” in relation to the assigned topic.
3. Ask students to turn each answer into a single, grammatical sentence that follows this WDWWWHW pattern.

Doing previous examples together will make this process clearer for students. Also, be sure to allow plenty of time for steps two and three. It is not unusual for students to need at least twice the amount of time it takes the instructor to complete the same task. Consider allowing students the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups the first time they try it.



### **Important notes:**

- Don't ask students to write a *One-Sentence Summary* of a topic unless you have done it first. This task is often difficult for students, so experiencing it yourself will help you gain a sense of where students might struggle. Also, realize that not all topics lend themselves to this technique.
- Make the task manageable by limiting options. For example, if you are using this technique with a text that has several main characters, identify the character that you would like for students to use as their focus.
- *One-Sentence Summary* is a nice technique that can help students connect ideas over time. For instance, you can use it a number of times to summarize different chapters of the same book or different facets of the same subject and then ask students to combine and revise these sentences to create a coherent paragraph that summarizes the whole.
- This technique also provides a nice text that students can use to compare their thoughts with one another.

### **Example (What We Do):**

**Who or what?** The Department of Teaching and Learning Support

**Does what?** offers teaching assistance

**To what or whom?** university faculty

**When?** throughout the semester

**Where?** on campus

**How?** professional development services

**Why?** to increase teaching efficacy and student success

### **Sentence form:**

The Department of Teaching and Learning Support offers teaching assistance to university faculty throughout the semester by providing campus-wide professional development services in order to increase teaching efficacy and student success.