Summarizing a Paragraph Practice

- A paragraph summary should be as short as possible, but it must be a **complete sentence**.

- The summary of a paragraph is the **main idea** of the paragraph. Often (but not always), the main idea is found in the topic sentence.

**Step 1** Read the paragraph all the way through to be sure you understand it.

**Step 2** Check to see if the paragraph contains a topic sentence.

**Step 3** Write the topic sentence or statement of the main idea in your own words and sentence structure.

  - If the paragraph has a topic sentence, does it state the main idea of the paragraph? If so, you can use the topic sentence as the summary.

  - If the topic sentence is not a good statement of the main idea, write a summary which states the main idea.

**Example:**

Shopping malls have produced a revolution in United States shopping and living habits in just 45 years. Before 1950, there were no malls, but now almost every city or region has at least one. In fact, shopping malls have become a part of daily life. Many people even think of them as social centers. In a way, malls have taken the place of Main Street. Shops and services, which were once spread over several city blocks, are now in one place at the mall. Busy householders can save time by doing their shopping at the mall. And people young and old, with time on their hands, often say, “Let’s go to the mall!”

**Topic Sentence:** Shopping malls have produced a revolution in United States shopping and living habits in just 45 years.

**Summary:** Shopping malls have changed United States culture.
The Challenger Disaster by Mary Jones

By 1984, NASA, the United States space program, had carried out many successful flights of the space shuttle. In fact, Americans were beginning to take the whole NASA program for granted. Then, the president announced that the next shuttle would carry a school teacher into space. Hundreds of teachers from all parts of the country applied for the job. They all wanted to be “the first teacher in space.” During the next year, these adventurous educators were tested and examined and trained. At last, the choice was announced. A teacher from New Hampshire, Christa MacAuliffe, would be the first teacher-astronaut.

Summary: _______________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Many months of preparation and training followed the announcement. First, Christa went through intensive physical training. She had to be in top condition for the flight. Then she learned how to operate some of the delicate instruments on the Challenger space shuttle. Christa planned special lesions, which she would teach from space. Finally, she trained with the astronauts, so they could work as a team in space.

Summary: _______________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
Everyone knows what happened on that terrible day in January, 1986. Early in the morning, the Challenger crew had a good breakfast and discussed their plans. They made sure they understood all of the work they would be doing during the flight. Later, they boarded a special van, which carried them to the shuttle. The weather was rather cold, and some NASA officials wondered if they should put off the flight. After some discussion, they decided to go ahead. The Challenger took off over the Atlantic Ocean in Florida. Minutes later, it exploded in the air. All the crew members died in the crash.

Summary: ___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________