

# Getting the Point

## **Levels**

Intermediate +

## **Aims**

Have students learn to summarize stories orally  
Practice recognizing main ideas and identifying plot and characters in a story

## **Class Time**

20 minutes

## **Preparation Time**

No set time

## **Caveats and Options**

We often want to share our reaction to stories we have read with others. This activity encourages students to talk about what they've read and lets them practice the language and communication skills they need to do that.

## **Procedure**

1. Tell the class that they will have 10 minutes during the following class period to tell a classmate about a book that they have read.
  2. Tell them to include the following information in their reports:
    - Title and author
    - Main characters
    - Plot
    - Outcome
    - Their opinion or recommendation
  3. To make sure that they understand the assignment, model an oral report about a book you have read for the class.
  4. The following day, divide the class into pairs. Give each person 10 minutes to report and answer any questions from the other person. Tell them that they can refer to notes but that they cannot read from their notes. Encourage them to look at their partners when they are speaking. Encourage the listeners to ask questions to make sure that they understand. Help them understand they are communicating something interesting, so they should act that way.
  5. After 10 minutes, have the partners switch roles.
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1. Have the students write a report of their oral summary, either as homework or as an in-class assignment, but limit the amount that

the students can write. For example, begin with a paragraph and then gradually increase the length requirement to a page or so during the semester or year.

2. Urge them to use their own words and not to copy sentences from the books. Also, encourage them to write in English, rather than translating from their first language.
3. It is helpful to save the first summaries and compare them to the final summaries the students do at the end of the course. This way you can tell if the students have improved.

## Contributors

*Beniko Mason and Tom Pendergast have been teaching and administering an extensive reading program at Shitennoji International Buddhist University, in Osaka, Japan, for the past 8 years.*