



Alphabet Soup

Student edition



Purpose for reading: To understand the main idea and details of an article

PAGE 1

Introduction: This activity will help you write a summary from a scramble of letters that you choose at random. You will learn to:

- ▶ Identify the main idea or message of an article.
- ▶ Identify details and facts that support the main idea.
- ▶ Write a summary using the “Alphabet Soup” strategy.

Your teacher is going to show you how to use the “Alphabet Soup” strategy to write a summary. Follow along as she or he reads the article “Distractions challenge teen drivers” aloud. Now, different students will pick up to 10 letters from the Alphabet Soup can. (The more letters you pick the more flexibility you will have when it’s time to write your summary. Having more letters does not mean that you have to write more sentences in the summary.) Watch as your teacher uses the letters you chose to write a summary on the Alphabet Soup graphic organizer (Page 2).

Now you are going to use the Alphabet Soup strategy to write a summary of your own

1. **As a class**, scan the articles in USA TODAY and select one that, like “Distractions challenge teen drivers,” talks about an environment that is difficult to deal with.
2. **As individuals**, read the article silently.
3. As you read, place a question mark “?” next to words you don’t know and try to guess the meaning of each from the context of the article.
4. Choose up to 10 letters from the Alphabet Soup can.
5. Write the letters at the top of your Alphabet Soup summary sheet.
6. Compose a sentence that begins with one of the letters you chose. Put the first letter in the left-hand column and cross it off your list of available letters at the top of your page.
7. Continue until your summary paragraph of 5-7 sentences is finished.
8. **As a class**, share some of your summaries.
9. **Discuss:** What was the most difficult part of this activity? How did being forced to use certain letters to begin your summary sentences change the way you thought about your word choices? How did you find or think up words that began with your designated letters? Finally, what are some strategies people use to deal with challenging situations?



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Name of USA TODAY article: _____

Letters you selected: _____

Enter letters in this column.	Enter sentences in this column.

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Time Requirement:

55 minutes

This lesson will help students write a summary using a word-game strategy. Because students are limited to writing sentences that begin with a randomly-chosen letter, they must think creatively about the spelling and meaning of words while considering how to use those words to summarize the article.

Standards:

- ▶ Analyzing word/text
- ▶ Identifying details/facts
- ▶ Identifying main idea/essential message

To ensure student understanding, it is best to read aloud the italicized instructions embedded in the lesson.

Prior preparation: It is important that you have Scrabble game letter tiles, colorful construction paper or index cards with letters on them. Eliminate the letters Q, X and Z and add more R and S tiles. Put them in a can or jar labeled “Alphabet Soup.”

Model: Read the article “Distractions challenge teen drivers” aloud as students follow along. After reading the article, have several different students pick up to 10 letters from the Alphabet Soup can. Let the students know that the more letters they pick, the more flexibility they will have when writing their own summaries. Point out that having more letters does *not* mean that they have to write more sentences. On an overhead, model the Alphabet Soup strategy using the graphic organizer provided on Page 2 of the student edition. Write the selected letters on the top of the summary sheet. As you use letters to begin summary sentences, cross them off the list of available letters. Encourage the whole class to help make sentences. Stop after a few sentences when students understand how to consider word choice. Allow 10 minutes.



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1. **As a class**, scan the articles in USA TODAY and select one that, like “Distractions challenge teen drivers,” talks about an environment that is difficult to deal with.
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7. Continue until your summary paragraph of 5-7 sentences is finished.
8. **As a class**, share some of your summaries.
9. **Discuss:** What was the most difficult part of this activity? How did being forced to use certain letters to begin your summary sentences change the way you thought about your word choices? How did you find or think up words that began with your designated letters? Finally, what are some strategies people use to deal with challenging situations?

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Time Requirement:
55 minutes

1. Selection: Help the class come to a general consensus on which article they will read, or, if you prefer, students can select their own articles. Allow 5 minutes.

2-3 Silent reading: As students read silently, circulate and have selected students read a paragraph aloud to you. This can also be done by conferencing at the back of the class. Encourage students to guess the meaning of unknown words from the context of the article. Clarify meaning as appropriate. Allow 15 minutes.

4-5. Letter selection: Students should select letters from the can and write the letters they've selected at the top of their Alphabet Soup graphic organizer. Allow 5 minutes.

6-7 Summarize: The Alphabet Soup summary sheet focuses student attention on the letters they selected and the sentences they must complete with those letters. Encourage students to think about the organization of their summaries before they commit to using specific letters in specific places. If time does not allow students to complete the activity in class, it can be assigned as homework. Allow 10 minutes.

8. Allow 5 minutes.

9. Reflect: Promote metacognition. Have students reflect on *how* they were thinking while they worked through the activity. Allow 5 minutes.

Extension: Use the Alphabet Soup strategy for another reading assignment that focuses on an advertisement, chart or other element of the paper.



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Adapted from Beers, S. & Howell, L. (2003), *Reading Strategies for the Content Areas, Volume 1*, Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.



As seen in



January 25, 2007

Distractions challenge teen drivers

Study: Many seem not to grasp the dangers

By Larry Copeland
USA TODAY

Teenagers understand the danger of drinking and driving but still don't grasp the risks of driver distractions such as cellphones, loud music and young passengers, says an extensive new study of teen habits behind the wheel.

About 90% of the teens surveyed say they rarely or never drink and drive, although 50% say they have seen other teens do so, according to the study released today by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm Insurance Companies. Much higher percentages say they have seen peers

speeding, driving while fatigued or dealing with distractions such as loud music and "passengers acting wild."

The research sought to get inside vehicles with young drivers and their passengers by surveying 5,665 ninth-, 10th- and 11th-graders from 68 randomly selected schools across the nation. The survey is part of a growing effort by child- and auto-safety advocates, insurance companies and others to cut teen driving deaths.

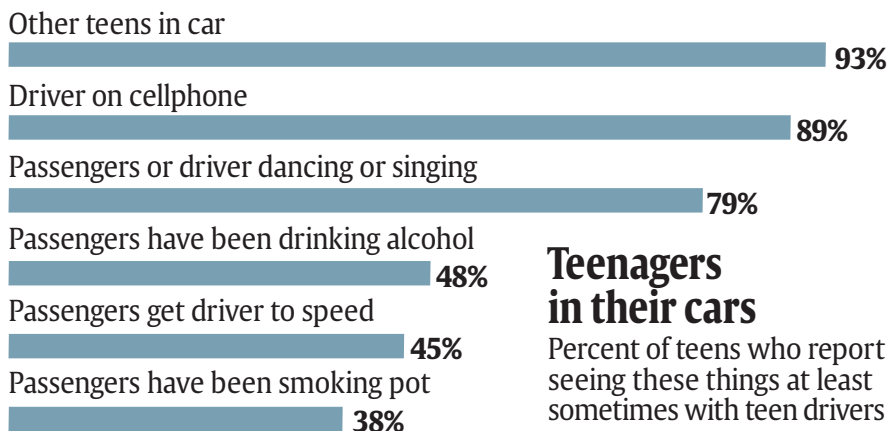
"Probably the most significant finding is that the environment inside the vehicle is very different from what adults might expect," says Laurette Stiles, State Farm's vice president for

strategic resources. "Teens have a very challenging (driving) environment, which would challenge even an experienced driver."

Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to 20-year-olds, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The nation's 12.5 million young drivers — those ages 15 to 20 — account for 6.3% of 198.9 million licensed drivers in the USA, according to 2005 NHTSA data, the most recent available. But 12.6% of all drivers involved in fatal crashes were in that age group.

Earlier research has shown that teen drivers carrying one teen passenger face double the risk of a fatal crash as teens driving alone. That risk increases to five times as likely for teen drivers with two or more passengers.

Sandy Coble, 47, of Jackson, Tenn., knows all about that risk. His only son, MacKenzie Allen Coble, 15, was one of three teens killed in a 2005 crash. None of the teens was wearing seat belts, he says. "Instead of picking out school clothes, I was picking out a casket."



Source: National survey of 5,665 students by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia — State Farm Alliance. Data are weighted to represent all 10.6 million U.S. public school students in grades 9–11.

By Bob Laird, USA TODAY

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