

4.4 Speaking and writing

GOALS ■ Write a summary ■ Give opinions and try to change someone's opinion

Writing writing a summary

- 1 Read the following quote. Do you agree with it? Why/Why not?

‘People don't need to learn things by heart any more. They can go on to their phones and find out things instantly, they don't have to remember. Education needs to focus on creativity and problem-solving, not learning facts.’

- 2 Read the blog post. What would the blog post author think about the quote in exercise 1? How do you know?

HOME BLOG ABOUT ME CONTACT

In defence of rote learning

a It is often said these days that the ‘Google generation’ has access to so many facts online that memorization is a waste of time. Learning by heart, or ‘rote learning’, is seen as not only pointless, but also mindless. People argue that it doesn't require any intelligence or creativity.

b Creativity and problem-solving are very fashionable in education. But how can people use their minds creatively if there's nothing actually memorized and stored in there? How do you create something from nothing?

c And, in fact, far from being a waste of time, memorization actually helps the brain to develop. Research shows that people who were required to learn things by heart at school are better able to focus on their work as adults.

d Sure, you can use a calculator these days, but isn't it actually quicker and easier to know your multiplication tables? If you just know these basic things, that frees up your brain power for bigger and better things.

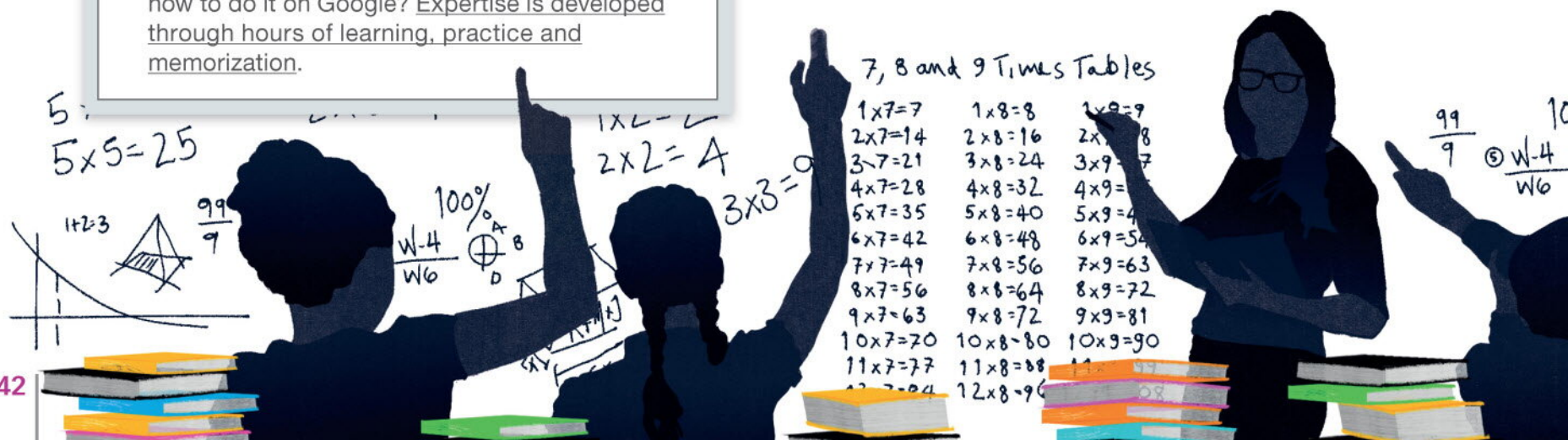
e Think about it. How would you feel about having surgery with a doctor who had just had to look up how to do it on Google? Expertise is developed through hours of learning, practice and memorization.

- 3 Match summaries 1–5 to paragraphs a–e in exercise 2.
- 1 Having to look up facts is a waste of time when you could just learn them.
 - 2 Practice and memorization are essential if you want to be an expert.
 - 3 Rote learning is often considered to be unnecessary and uncreative.
 - 4 People need background knowledge, as well as the ability to be creative.
 - 5 Learning things by heart benefits the brain.
- 4a Look at the possible summaries below. Which is the best overall summary of the blog post in exercise 2? Why?

A Many people think that rote learning is unnecessary and uncreative, but people need background knowledge before they can be creative. Learning things by heart makes the brain grow and, in the long run, saves a lot of time looking things up. It's also essential for anyone who wants to master a skill.

B Many people think that memorization is a waste of time when any facts you could possibly need are easily available online on such sites as Wikipedia. It is argued that the ‘Google generation’ need to learn problem-solving and creativity, rather than facts and figures. However, there are many good reasons why learning things by heart can be beneficial.

- b Compare your ideas with the following tips for writing a summary. Can you find good or bad examples in the two summaries in exercise 4a?
- 1 A summary should include all or most of the main ideas in the text (not minor details).
 - 2 You should use your own words where possible.
 - 3 You should not add your own opinion or any extra information.



5 Read the information in the Language for writing box about paraphrasing in summaries.

LANGUAGE FOR WRITING paraphrasing in summaries

- Paraphrasing can involve replacing words and phrases with synonyms, e.g. *memorization* could be replaced with *rote learning* or *learning by heart*.
- However, it is also often necessary to change the grammatical structure of the sentence.
- An active sentence could be made passive, e.g. *People often say that ...* could be replaced with *It is often thought that ...*
- Or a verb phrase could become a noun phrase, e.g. *learning by heart helps the brain to develop* could become *brain development is encouraged by memorization*.

6 How are the underlined phrases or sections from the blog post in exercise 2 paraphrased in summary A in exercise 4a? Discuss with a partner.

7a **TASK** Read the short article from a website. Write a summary, in 50–60 words, of the key points of the article.

b Look at your summary carefully. Have you covered all the key points in exercise 4b?

NEWS EDUCATION

According to a new international study, education does not have to be a choice between rote learning or learning to think creatively. In fact, it seems that rote learning can eventually help learners to be better at problem-solving.

‘Learning some knowledge and memorizing it is not a bad thing, it is a good thing,’ argues Sir Michael Barber, a top education adviser who worked on the study. ‘It is the basis on which you can do problem-solving. And the more knowledge you have, the more knowledge you are able to learn in the future, because it gives you a framework.’

The study ranked countries on their educational performance, finding that Asian countries, such as South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong, all did extremely well. All these countries are known for their reliance on rote learning and often criticized for it.

However, the study also found that these countries did extremely well in problem-solving tests, indicating that the more traditional methods used also enabled students to think for themselves.

Speaking & Listening giving opinions and trying to change someone’s opinion

8 What makes a good teacher? Is it more important for them to be creative, or motivating, or strict? With your partner, decide on the five most important qualities.

9 **4.10**))) Listen to two friends discussing the same question as in exercise 8. Do they use any of the same adjectives you thought of? What else do they think is important?

10a Complete the phrases with words from the box.

hand look personally point say see seems

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Well, I have to _____ that ... | 5 _____, I think ... |
| 2 Well, you’ve got a _____, but ... | 6 As I _____ it, ... |
| 3 Yes, but on the other _____ ... | 7 It _____ to me ... |
| 4 No, but _____ ... | |

b Put the completed phrases in exercise 10a into the correct category in the Language for speaking box.

LANGUAGE FOR SPEAKING giving opinions and trying to change someone’s opinion

Giving opinions

From my point of view, ...



Trying to change someone’s opinion

Yes, but don’t you think ...?

Yes, but if you look at it from a different angle, surely ...

11 **4.10**))) Listen again and check your answers.

PRONUNCIATION intonation – softening language

12a **4.11**))) Listen to the way that the speakers use intonation to soften the first part of what they say. Which is the closest intonation pattern, a  or b .

- 1 Yes, but on the other hand ...
- 2 No, but look, ...
- 3 Well, you’ve got a point, but ...

b **4.11**))) Listen again and repeat, paying attention to the intonation.

13 Work with another pair. Decide on the five most important qualities of a teacher together, and put them in order of importance.

