**This** and Summary Phrases

As indicated earlier, *this/these* + a noun can be used to establish a good old-to-new flow of information. Consider the following sentences.

Writing instructors know that students need to understand the differences between formal and informal language. *This understanding* can help students make strategic choices in their writing.

What does *this understanding* refer to? Consider the following sentences.

In recent years, the number of students applying to PhD programs has increased steadily, while the number of places available has remained fairly constant. *This situation* has resulted in intense competition for admission.

What does *this situation* refer to? What is the effect of using *this* instead of *that*?

The phrases in italics contain a summary noun or word that refers back to the idea in the previous sentence. They summarize what has already been said and pick up where the previous sentence has ended. You may have noticed in your academic reading that *this* is not always followed by a noun—that is, *this* is unsupported or unattended. Keep in mind, however, that if there is a possibility your reader will not understand what *this* is referring to, your best strategy is to follow *this* with a noun so that your meaning is clear.

Choose a noun to complete the second sentence of each set of sentences. More than one answer may be possible.

1. According to a recent survey, 26% of all American adults, down from 38% 30 years ago, now smoke. *This ____________ can be partly attributed to the mounting evidence linking smoking and fatal diseases, such as cancer.*
   a. decline  b. decrease  c. drop  d. improvement  e. reduction

Can you think of any other nouns that could complete the sentence?
2. Early in September each year, the population of Ann Arbor, Michigan, suddenly increases by about 25,000 as students arrive for the new academic year. This ____________ changes the character of the town in a number of ways.

a. increase  b. influx  c. invasion  d. jump  e. rise

Can you think of any other nouns that could complete the sentence?

________________________________________

3. Nowadays, laptop computers are lighter, more powerful, and easier to use than they were five years ago. These ____________ have led to an increase in the sales of these machines.

a. advances  b. changes  c. developments  d. improvements

Can you think of any other nouns that could complete the sentence?

Choose a summary word from the list to complete each sentence. Can you think of other possible summary words in addition to those on the list?

difficulty  estimation  problem  situation
disruption  finding  process  view

1. The traditional economic and consumer behavior models assume a rational, thoughtful consumer who gathers information about a good and then carefully makes a purchase. This ____________ has recently been challenged, particularly because of the growing number of consumer choices.

2. Our pilot study has shown that wind turbines used to generate electricity can pose a threat to flying birds. This ____________ suggests a need for further research on improving the safety of these mechanisms.

3. In soccer, goalkeepers routinely wear gloves that may restrict heat loss from the hands and cause discomfort. In order to alleviate this ____________, special materials, called phase control materials (PCMs), have been incorporated into gloves to reduce the amount of heat inside the glove, thus maintaining a comfortable temperature.

4. Normal average human skin temperature is 37°C. At any lower environmental temperature, heat will be lost from the skin to the environment as the body attempts to heat up the air in direct contact with the body. This _______________ is known as conduction.
5. Until adjustment of the body clock has occurred, individuals suffering from “jet lag” feel tired during the new daytime, yet are unable to sleep properly during the new night. For athletes in particular this ____________ of sleep can affect mood and powers of concentration and might result in poorer training performances and competition results (Reilly et al., 1997b).

6. Until recently, the support needs of frail older people in Sweden have been met primarily by the state, with there being little expectation that the family would provide care. This ____________ is now changing as increasing emphasis is being placed on the role of the family.

Now try to find your own summary words that can complete these sentences.

1. Irrigation in sub-Saharan Africa is in most cases performed using a rope and bucket to raise and distribute water from a shallow open well. While this ____________ has the advantage of being inexpensive, its low capacity and labor-intensive nature is decidedly a disadvantage.

2. Motor vehicle deaths in the U.S. declined from nearly 60,000 in 1966 to just over 40,000 in 2011, even though Americans drive millions more miles now and millions more vehicles are on the road. The death rate, which was 7.6 deaths per 100 million miles in 1950, declined from 5.5 in 1966 to 1.6 in 2011. This ____________ can be attributed to the manufacture of safer vehicles with features such as airbags and antilock brakes.

3. Haigney concludes from his study that driving performance decreases when drivers use their cell phones. This ____________ is consistent with recent reviews of the literature on driving distractions.

4. Although it seems that the construction of new roads and widening of existing roads should reduce traffic congestion, recent research has shown that these activities actually lead to increases in traffic. This ____________ is known as the “induced traffic” effect.

5. In 1900, average life expectancy at birth was 47 years for individuals born in developed countries. In 1950, life expectancy was nearly 68. For newborns today, life expectancy is about 77 years. This ____________, however, does not mean that humans are undergoing some physiological change. Rather, it is a result of advances in medicine and technology.
Summary expressions may be expanded into longer phrases to add clarity or interpretation. However, you should weigh the benefits of expanding the summary phrase. A long and possibly complicated summary phrase may actually be less effective.

Consider the opening sentences and Options a–d. Which of the options would you choose as the fourth sentence?

6. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 20% of all households have access to financial services. In 2010, nearly 70 percent of Kenyan households either had no bank accounts or relied on informal sources of finance. In 2011, 13 commercial banks were operating in Benin, a country with a population of 10 million.
   a. This limits market exchanges, increases risk, and limits opportunities to save.
   b. This lack limits market exchanges, increases risk, and limits opportunities to save.
   c. This lack of formal financial services limits market exchanges, increases risk, and limits opportunities to save.
   d. This lack of formal financial services in parts of Africa limits market exchanges, increases risk, and limits opportunities to save.

Finally, we need to say something about whether it is better to use *it* or *this* to refer back to something stated earlier in the text.

Which sentence in each set makes better sense following the main sentence? While all of the choices are grammatically correct, which one seems to better capture the connection?

1. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) has been rapidly expanding over the past decade, growing at a rate of nearly 200%.
   a. It can be partially attributed to local telephone service providers, who were not specialized telecommunications operators, entering the VoIP market.
   b. This can be partially attributed to local telephone service providers, who were not specialized telecommunications operators, entering the VoIP market.
2. Our survey reveals an extremely high level of confidence that businesses are well equipped to prevent targeted cyber attacks by outsiders. 94% of the businesses that responded described themselves as fairly or very confident.
   a. It suggests that the reality of the threats facing businesses has not been made clear.
   b. This unexpected finding suggests that the reality of the threats facing businesses has not been made clear.

3. Researchers have found that it is easier to start a traffic jam than to stop one. A small, but temporary, increase in the number of cars entering a highway can cause a bottleneck; however, after the number of cars decreases, traffic jams generally continue.
   a. It has been verified through the use of sensor data from Germany and the Netherlands.
   b. This has been verified through the use of sensor data from Germany and the Netherlands.
   c. This phenomenon has been verified through the use of sensor data from Germany and the Netherlands.
   d. This traffic phenomenon has been verified through the use of sensor data from Germany and the Netherlands.