

Writing a Summary

Writing Center

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A summary is a short version of a longer original that expresses the substance (meaning, emphasis, and organization) of the original in a condensed form. Summaries are an economical way to communicate the main points and key supporting ideas of an article, chapter, book, movie, or TV show. Summaries can be useful in studying long passages by supplying essential information—the most important information in the fewest words—clearly and concisely. **Summaries are written in your own words.**

Qualities of a good summary

- written in own words
- follows the order of the original
- limited to one-third the length of the original

Steps to writing a summary

1. Read the article, paying attention to the title, subheadings, captions, photos, graphs, charts, etc. that might accompany the article.
2. Read the article through for a general understanding, noting key points and main ideas.
3. Reread the article, highlighting main ideas and key points. Try to understand each idea and how it relates to the previous and following ideas.
4. Check your notes on the article, making sure you understand it and can identify main ideas and key supporting points. **You cannot write a summary in your own words if you do not understand the content.**
5. Write a rough draft of your summary.
 - Ask yourself, “What is the main idea of this article?” Turn your answer into a statement that begins your summary. Include in this first sentence the article’s title, author’s name and the name and date of the publication containing the article.
 - Use your own words; quote only unique or special phrases.
 - Use a concise, direct style.
 - Maintain an objective tone—no personal opinion.
 - Use the same organization as the original—do not rearrange ideas.
 - Emphasize the same ideas as the author—if the author spends 60% of the article on one idea, your summary should have the same proportion.
 - Include only enough detail for the summary to make sense—your purpose is to condense.
6. Revise the rough draft, making sure it is accurate, clear and concise.
7. Edit the revised draft. Proofread for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.