

Summary

A summary is a shortened version of the original. The main purpose of such a simplification is to highlight the major points from the genuine (much longer) subject, e.g. a text, a film or an event. The aim is the audience to get the gist in a short period of time.

A summary starts with a lead, including title, author, text type and the main idea of the text. It has a clearly arranged structure and is written in a logical, chronological and traceable manner. In contrast to a résumé or a review, a summary contains neither interpretation nor rating. Only the opinion of the original writer is reflected – paraphrased with new words without quotations from the text. Unlike a retelling, a summary has no dramatic structure and is written in present tense or historic present. Because summaries should be significantly shorter than the original, minor facts have to be left out. In summaries only indirect speech is used and depictions are avoided. Summaries of books or dissertations present the major facts in common scientific language and should be about from a half up to one page long.

- How to write a summary:
 - Read the text
 - Formulate the main statement
 - Reread the text and underline important ideas and arguments according to the main statement
 - Introduce the author and title of the work in the opening sentence
 - Mention the important facts in chronological order
 - Check that your summary reflects the original conclusion

Read the passage carefully. Determine its structure. Identify the author's purpose in writing. (This will help you to distinguish between more important and less important information.)

Reread, label, and underline. This time divide the passage into sections or stages of thought. The author's use of paragraphing will often be a useful guide. Label, on the passage itself, each section or stage of thought. Underline key ideas and terms.

Write one-sentence summaries, on a separate sheet of paper, of each stage of thought.

Write a thesis--a one-sentence summary of the entire passage. The thesis should express the central idea of the passage, as you have determined it from the preceding steps. You may find it useful to keep in mind the information contained in the lead sentence or paragraph of most newspaper stories--the *what, who, why, where, when, and how* of the matter. For persuasive passages, summarize in a sentence the author's conclusion. For descriptive passages, indicate the subject of the description and its key features. Note: *In some cases a suitable thesis may already be in the original passage.* If so, you may want to quote it directly in your summary.

Write the first draft of your summary by (1) combining the thesis with your list of one-sentence summaries or (2) combining the thesis with one-sentence summaries plus significant details from the passage. In either case, eliminate repetition. Eliminate less important information. Disregard minor details, or generalize them. Use as few words as possible to convey the main ideas.

Check your summary against the original passage, and make whatever adjustments are necessary for accuracy and completeness.

Revise your summary, inserting transitional words and phrases where necessary to ensure coherence. Check for style. Avoid series of short, choppy sentences. Combine sentences for a smooth, logical flow of ideas. Check for grammatical correctness, punctuation, and spelling.

TASK: Summarise the content of the following sentences in a few words:

- a. People whose professional activity lies in the field of politics are not, on the whole, conspicuous for their respect for factual accuracy.
- b. Failure to assimilate an adequate quantity of solid food over an extended period of time is absolutely certain to lead, in due course, to a fatal conclusion.
- c. The climatic conditions prevailing in the British Isles show a pattern of alternating and unpredictable periods of dry and wet weather, accompanied by a similarly irregular cycle of temperature changes.
- d. It is undeniable that the large majority of non-native learners of English experience a number of problems in attempting to master the phonetic patterns of the language.
- e. Tea, whether of the China or Indian variety, is well known to be high on the list of those beverages which are most frequently drunk by the inhabitants of the British Isles.
- f. It is not uncommon to encounter sentences which, though they contain a great number of words and are constructed in a highly complex way, none the less turn out on inspection to convey very little meaning of any kind.
- g. One of the most noticeable phenomena in any big city, such as London or Paris, is the steadily increasing number of petrol-driven vehicles, some in private ownership, others belonging to the public transport system, which congest the roads and render rapid movement more difficult year by year.