

WRITING A SUMMARY

Summarizing skills are very important for university students. You need to use summaries of information, opinions and arguments of other people to support or provide evidence for your own ideas on academic topics. Writing good summaries also shows that you have read and understood the sources which you are supposed to study.

Key characteristics of a good summary

- It is shorter than the original text
- It does not change the main meaning of the original text
- It is written in your own words, otherwise you may plagiarize the text
- It focuses on the main idea but may include any key supporting details

1. Summarizing a short paragraph - work with a partner and try to say the same thing differently.

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| people | <i>individuals</i> | job | |
| achieve | | wealth | |
| satisfaction | | pressure | |

2. Look at the paragraph below and the notes. Underline the parts that the writer has noted down.

People working in all of these jobs have a range of targets to achieve and deadlines to meet in order to satisfy their employers. If you work in sales and marketing, you will almost certainly have to meet sales targets. If you are a teacher, you will have to meet deadlines for handling in students' grades. Or, if you are an engineer, you will have to meet project deadlines. A shortage of time seems to cause pressure in a wide range of professions.

*Meet goals and deadlines = happy boss.
Stressful jobs = deadlines + limited time.*

3. How different is the following summary from the original text? Is the student likely to be accused of plagiarizing?

Meeting goals and deadlines is the key to keeping your boss happy. All of these stressful jobs have a lot of deadlines and limited time to meet them.

4. Discuss the features of an effective summary with a partner. Are the following statements true or false?

- A) the same order of facts and ideas as the original
- B) similar wording to the original with some phrase exactly the same
- C) different sentence structures from the original
- D) identification of key points in the original
- E) additional information which helps understanding the topic
- F) simpler vocabulary than the original
- G) a personal comment on the subject

What is your method of writing a summary?

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5. To write a summary, follow these steps:

(but first complete them)

expand your notes *change the order* *the main idea* *the main points*

a mind map *clearly and briefly* *have included all*

1. Read the text through.
2. Highlight ...
3. Reread the text making notes and / or ...
4. Put away the original and ... in your own words.
5. Restate ... at the beginning and indicate where the information is from.
6. Mention other major points.
7. ... of the points if it makes the structure more logical.
8. Re-read your summary to see if you ... important information and expressed it

LANGUAGE FOR SUMMARIZING

A. LINKING EXPRESSIONS

They show how ideas are connected to each other and help the reader understand the text.

Underline the words that you are used to using and compare your list with a partner.

- **sequence:** *firstly, second, secondly, third, thirdly, next, last, finally, in addition, moreover, furthermore, in conclusion, to summarise*
- **comparison:** *similarly, likewise, also, too, as, just as, and, like, similar to, be the same as, not only ... but also, to compare with/to*
- **cause:** *for, because, since, as, because of, to cause*
- **effect:** *so, as a result, as a consequence, therefore, thus, consequently, hence, to result from, due to, to result in, to affect*
- **contrast:** *however, nevertheless, still, although, even though, but, yet, despite, in spite of, in comparison, while, whereas, on the contrary, on the other hand, by/in contrast, having said that*
- **emphasis:** *undoubtedly, indeed, obviously, generally, admittedly, particularly, especially, clearly*
- **example:** *for example, for instance, that is, such as, including, namely, especially, particularly, in particular*

B. VERBS

To introduce the main idea you can use phrases

“According to the author“

“The author’s opinion/view is that“

or reporting verbs in the present tense to indicate what the author says - the author...

| | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <i>explains</i> | <i>declares</i> | <i>stresses</i> | <i>suggests</i> | <i>agrees</i> |
| <i>analyses</i> | <i>states</i> | <i>criticizes</i> | <i>recommends</i> | <i>introduces</i> |
| <i>compares</i> | <i>mentions</i> | <i>argues</i> | <i>advises</i> | <i>concludes</i> |

informs *claims* *points out*

Reorder the words in brackets to make correct sentences. Add punctuation where necessary.

1. (Escher according to) It should be possible to stabilize this chemical reaction for commercial use.
2. (that Bostock's is view) Crime statistics are frequently manipulated to support political arguments.
3. (has out that Stevens pointed) Some plant species may die out before they have even been recorded.

C. YOUR PERSONAL OPINION

The expression of your personal opinion is **not** a part of the summary itself but may follow when you evaluate information and make conclusions. If you do not give a reference to an idea, the reader will normally understand that it is your view. There is little need for using phrases such as *I think* or *In my opinion*

But you can use, for example *It is likely that*
The evidence suggests that
It can be argued that

Complete the sentences with one suitable word.

1. Most people would that technological innovation is the key to manufacturing success.
2. The evidence that molecular water exists across the surface of the moon.
3. It could be that the internet is forcing us to think about copyright.

D. PARAPHRASING

WORDS THAT NEED NOT BE CHANGED (it will not be plagiarism)

- nouns / noun phrases that we all use for specific things,
e.g. *hospital, passport, processed food, residential area, chemical reaction*
- specialized words within particular disciplines,
e.g. *cash, budget, catalyst, relative humidity*

Circle the words that you do not need to paraphrase.

1. High-speed trains are a prerequisite for a thriving modern economy.
2. The Asian tiger is under threat as a trophy for hunters on safari; as a source of parts for traditional medicine; and for its skin.
3. Reaching agreement over copyright issues is the most pressing issue that the music industry faces.

USE OF SYNONYMS

- Make sure that the synonym you choose represents the meaning of the original word in its particular context, see the definition and examples of use.

Replace the underlined word with a synonym.

1. Fortunately, no harm was done to the unique ecosystem.

2. A financial penalty was imposed on the company found guilty of polluting the river.
3. This was an interesting experiment to investigate the effects of long-term isolation.
4. The cuts are likely to have negative effects on the economy.
5. The problem was extraordinarily difficult to solve.

CHANGES IN WORD FORMS

- Many words have several grammatical forms. These are called word families.
analyse - analysis, analyst - analytical - analytically
- Changing the word into a different form makes you change the grammar of a sentence and paraphrase it in your own words.

Try to change these sentences, use the word in brackets:

1. Competition for quality jobs at postgraduate level is fierce at the moment. (compete)
2. The mineral wealth of the Ural mountains has had a fundamental effect on the region's history. (fundamentally)

CHANGES IN STRUCTURE

- Sometimes the change in the grammatical structure can help you to make a paraphrase. You need grammatical knowledge to make transformations.

Paraphrase these sentences by changing the structure.

1. The spread of GM trials led to a series of protests. (use *result from*)
2. It may happen that paying a fine will be cheaper than going to court. (use *as ...as*)
3. Despite their many advantages, lithium-ion batteries have some drawbacks. (use *although*)
4. It is possible that a medical breakthrough in the field of cancer will happen in the next ten years.
(use a modal)
5. After Tom Azezi left the team, his inventions were on a much smaller scale. (use *-ing*)

Credit assignment

Choose ONE of the three texts that are uploaded in the information system and write an academic summary of the article.

This description explains how your summary will be assessed.

| Excellent | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
|---|--|--|
| The summary convinces the reader that you have read the article closely | The summary convinces your reader that you have read and | The summary doesn't convince the reader that you have read the article |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>and understand its argument because the summary accurately and objectively represents the author's central claim and key supporting points. The summary does not merely list the main ideas but shows how the reasons support the claim. The summary is selective about details and examples, choosing only ones that help to illustrate a key point.</p> | <p>understood the key points of the article. It could, perhaps, improve in showing the connection between the main claim and how it is supported. The summary may have some extra, unneeded details from the article. There may be parts of the summary that are inaccurate, incomplete, or subjective.</p> | <p>closely because its argument is not clearly represented or there may be inaccuracies. The summary may provide a list of points rather than any sense of a larger claim supported by reasons and evidence. The summary loses focus through inclusion of minor or off-topic points. Your opinions and judgments are included in the summary.</p> |
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Sources

Ex 1-3 Rogers, Wilkin: Skillful Reading and Writing, Macmillan, 2013,p.63

<http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/students/fwalters/paraphrase.html>

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Ken Patterson: Oxford Grammar for EAP, OUP, 2013

<http://writing.colostate.edu/comparchive/co150/09-10/phaseoneacademicsummary.cfm>

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