



## How to write a summary

What is a summary? It is a brief restatement – IN YOUR OWN WORDS – of the contents of a passage.

You simply report back what the other writer has said. It is not your job to make value judgements about the "rightness" or "wrongness" of what (s)he says. That would be a different kind of paper – a summary-response, a critique, or a position paper.

A guideline for length: many good summaries are about 1/4 to 1/3 the length of the original.

### What are the steps in writing a summary?

1. **Read the passage carefully.** Analyse its structure. Identify the author's intention in writing. This will help you to distinguish between more important and less important information.
2. **Reread and underline.** This time divide the passage into sections of thought. The author's use of paragraphing will often be a useful guide. Label, on the passage itself, each section of thought. Underline key ideas and terms.
3. **Write one-sentence summaries,** on a separate sheet of paper, of each stage of thought. If you have trouble doing this, you might try writing a summary sentence for each paragraph and then revising where you see yourself repeating ideas. 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. Put the author's ideas into your own words!
4. **Write the first draft of your summary,** including the following aspects in the first two sentences: 1) the author's name, 2) the text's title, and 3) the author's main idea or thesis statement. After that you combine the thesis with your list of one-sentence summaries. Eliminate repetition and less important information.
5. **Check your summary against the original passage,** and make whatever adjustments are necessary for accuracy and completeness.
6. **Revise your summary,** inserting transitional words and phrases where necessary to ensure coherence (like "in addition", "moreover", "although", "on the other hand", "however", "finally", "consequently"). Check for style. Combine sentences for a logical flow of ideas. Check for grammatical correctness, punctuation, and spelling.

#### Vocabulary:

|                    |   |                 |                     |   |                             |
|--------------------|---|-----------------|---------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| brief              | = | kurz            | to divide           | = | unterteilen                 |
| restatement        | = | Neuformulierung | section of thought  | = | Gedankenpassage             |
| passage            | = | Absatz          | to revise           | = | überarbeiten                |
| content            | = | Inhalt          | paragraphing        | = | Absätze machen              |
| value judgement    | = | Werturteil      | useful              | = | nützlich                    |
| response           | = | Antwort         | guide               | = | Leiter/Anleitung            |
| intention          | = | Absicht         | to label            | = | kennzeichnen                |
| to distinguish     | = | unterscheiden   | key ideas and terms | = | Schlüsselideen u. -begriffe |
| reread             | = | wiederlesen     | to contain          | = | enthalten/beinhalten        |
| lead sentence      | = | Einleitungssatz | matter              | = | Angelegenheit               |
| draft              | = | Entwurf         | thesis              | = | These, Behauptung           |
| statement          | = | Behauptung      | to eliminate        | = | beseitigen/entfernen        |
| adjustment         | = | Angleichung     | accuracy            | = | Fehlerfreiheit/Präzision    |
| transitional words | = | Übergangswörter | coherence           | = | logischer Zusammenhang      |