

The Summary

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- Includes no attempt at original thought

Why write a summary?

- To demonstrate mastery of a text
- To check yourself while studying a text
- To prepare source material for a research paper
- To gain a stronger sense of structure in texts

Good summaries call for good reading.

So, first =>

A few Reading Strategies

Before You Read

- Determine your **goal or objective** in reading the assignment.

How you read should be determined by *what* you read

- Give yourself **plenty of time** to read.
- Have **a pen or pencil** in hand.
- Prepare yourself for *re-reading*.

Reading Strategy: The SQ3R Method

Survey, skim, and scan entire reading assignment.

Preview titles, subtitles, charts, diagrams, figures, tables, conclusion/summary, and abstract/introduction.

Question the authors' purpose and tone.

Develop and write out questions about each section of the reading, and use them to guide your reading and note-taking.

Read the assignment thoroughly.

Read one section at a time, reflect on what you read, and don't get too bogged down with details. Search for the main ideas and supporting details.

Recite and recall the information by summarizing and paraphrasing.

Did you find the answers to the questions you wrote down earlier?

Review the reading again and over time.

Annotation

is the act of annotating, making notes, commenting upon a text, and is very important for comprehension. A few tips:

- **Try different note-taking strategies** (mapping, outlining, 2-column, word-for-word) and use the one that both fits you best and engages you in the reading.
- **Pay attention to what each section is about.** The Abstract, Discussion, and Conclusion sections usually have the most important information.
- **Take notes while you are reading** (so that you needn't go back and re-read while writing your paper)
- **Write summary notes for main points** in the margin, or on a separate piece of paper
- **Highlight only very important quotes or terms**

Now, let's get to

Strategies for Writing a Summary

1. Determine the author's Purpose

- What exactly is (s)he trying to do with this information?
- What is the author's attitude toward the information?
- What response does (s)he want from his/her audience?

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Note that the author often has *more than one purpose*.

For example:

Consider Aesop's "The Tortoise and the Hare."

What is Aesop's purpose?

Think in terms of **verbs**.

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In "The T & the Hare," Aesop **relates** a story and **teaches** a lesson, so your purpose verbs might be "relates" and "teaches."

Another Example:

The Declaration of Independence

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First: They assert, pronounce, or hold...

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And finally: They declare, proclaim, or conclude...

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At different points in the essay, does the author

- argue a point?
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- compare and/or contrast views?
- offer an alternative?
- examine a cause or effect?
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How do the different parts of the essay connect and build?

For example, let's go back to the Declaration,
and say I've chosen my three verbs.

In The Declaration of Independence, the Founders

- assert
- accuse

and

- conclude

In The Declaration of Independence, the Founders

- assert that tyrannical governments must be overthrown
- accuse

and

- conclude

In The Declaration of Independence, the Founders

- assert that tyrannical governments must be overthrown
- accuse King George's government of many tyrannical acts

and

- conclude

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- assert that tyrannical governments must be overthrown
- accuse King George's government of many tyrannical acts

and

- conclude that his government must therefore be overthrown

Now, put it all together =>

In the first sentence of the Summary,
state the Purpose and Thesis.

“In _____, _____ _____s
[title] [author] [verb]

that _____.”
[thesis, in your own words]

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“In The Declaration of Independence, the Founders **assert** that tyrannical governments must be overthrown, **accuse** King George’s government of many tyrannical acts, and **conclude** that his government must therefore be overthrown.”

This is our statement of purpose and thesis.

Now that we've

1. Determined the Purpose, and
 2. Stated the Purpose and Thesis,
- let's move on to

3. Sum up the Body

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There are two strategies:

1. Write a one- to two-sentence synopsis of each paragraph.

OR

2.

- Group the text into sections of **related paragraphs** or **sentences**, then:
- Write a two- to three-sentence synopsis of each group.

3. Sum up the Body

For both strategies:

- *Don't* include minor points, stats, or examples.
- Use transitional words or phrases to connect summary sentences.
- Double-check your language for *inadvertent plagiarism*.

Putting it all Together

- Begin the summary with your statement of purpose and thesis
- Then, add the one- to three-sentence synopses of each paragraph or groups of paragraphs.
- Finally, double-check to make sure that your summary contains no
 - Inadvertent plagiarism
 - Thoughts or analysis of your own
 - Spelling or grammatical errors

Long-term Benefits

Good précis-writing skills can help you to

- Understand what you read
- Articulate what you read to professors and colleagues
- Improve the structure and development of your own writing

Other Resources

- Web pages about writing summaries:

<http://web.uvic.ca/wguide/Pages/summariesTOC.html>

<http://users.drew.edu/~sjamieso/summary.html>

- For general writing assistance, contact
Megan Grumbling at mgrumbling@une.edu or
John Daugherty at jdaugherty@une.edu

- For help with reading or note taking strategies, contact
Lorraine Pecchia at lpecchia@une.edu