HOW TO WRITE A SUMMARY

1. **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.

2. **Reread.** This time divide the passage into sections. The author's use of paragraphing will often be a useful guide. Write on the passage itself, mark each section or stage of thought. (Underline key ideas and/or terms)

3. **Write one-sentence summaries** for each section or stage of thought.

4. **Write a thesis:** a one-sentence summary of the entire passage. The thesis should express the central idea of the passage, determined it from the preceding steps. It may be 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 **expository passages**, summarize in a sentence the subject's material and its key feature(s). For **narrative passages**, summarize in a sentence the subject's material, and its key feature(s). **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.

5. **Write the first draft** of your summary by (1) Combining the thesis with the 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 (e.g., Nixon, Ford, and Carter might be generalized as "recent presidents"). Use as few words as possible to convey the main ideas.

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

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


**Example of an essay summary**

**"Essay Title"

**Introductory Paragraph:** In the introduction to your essay, you can include background information and a statement of the issues involved. It is important to capture the reader's interest at this point.

**Body of Essay:** In the body, which may consist of one or several paragraphs, list the reasons and discuss the underlying assumptions. Then assess the validity of the assumptions.

The article (title) written by (author) deals with the issue of (topic) and takes the position

The author provides several reasons to support his/her position and makes several assumptions. For example, he/she states (give reason). The assumption behind this reason (OR the writer assumes) is (give assumption). This assumption is correct or incorrect because (give reasons).

Give the reason and the assumptions then explain why you do or do not accept the assumption. Be sure to point out vague terms and how they affect the author's reasoning.

The author's reasoning suffers because of his/her use of vague terms. For instance, (give examples).

**Concluding Paragraph:** Here you summarize your analysis of the author's argument, as well as offering supplemental information or giving your own opinion of the issue.

*For example:*

In conclusion, I accept/reject the author's argument because (give reasons) Possible reasons might include the following:

The evidence is (is not) very convincing. (Explain.) The author relies too much on personal experiences that may not be typical of all people. (Explain) I don't agree with the author's value assumptions (State your belief and give alternatives.) The evidence is weak but I have the same values as the author. (Explain)

To begin a writing assignment from a JOURNAL, MAGAZINE, or NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

All of the information about the article should be provided in the introductory sentence, as well as stating the main idea of the article.

**OPTION 1**

The article “Safe-Patient-Handling Equipment in Therapy Practice: Implications for Rehabilitation,” by Amy R. Darragh, Marc A. Campo, Lenore Frost, Melissa Miller, Marissa Penticso, and Heather Margulis found in the January 2013 issue of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, volume 67 on pages 45-53 offers information on how safe-patient-handling (SPH) equipment is used in rehabilitation and how it affects therapists, patients, and therapy practice.

**OPTION 2**


**OPTION 3**

In the article “Disgraced Reporter Blair talks to UAlbany Students about Journalism,” *(Times Union (Albany, NY); December 3, 2009; pgs. B5, B7), Blair made a pro-bono visit to journalism classes so that his mistakes can be lessons for future reporters.

**OPTION 4**

The article “Gold and Silver,” by Joe Lawrence, found in *Newsweek*, September 3, 2002, pages 29-32, states that gold and silver are still the precious metals to invest in because their value never goes down.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA QUESTIONS: WRITING THE OBJECTIVE SUMMARY</th>
<th>CRITERIA QUESTIONS: WRITING THE CRITICAL SUMMARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captured the essence of the article or chapter in an objective way? Reported the information as accurately and economically? Avoided evaluating, disputing, or agreeing with the facts and ideas in the selection?</td>
<td>Was the purpose of the article clear? To prove something, fulfill your expectations? To analyze something, fulfill the commitment? Satisfied or disappointed or puzzled by the article?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given readers what they need in order to understand the gist of the article or chapter? Will the readers have an accurate and complete idea of what the author was trying to communicate?</td>
<td>Author’s attitude toward the reader? Author’s opinion of the reader? Author concerned about the reader’s needs Author writing to no one in particular? Author aimed at the right audience?</td>
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<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Used your own words in summarizing the original source? Clearly indicated what material is quoted directly from the original source? Is the objective summary short enough, about a third the length of the original piece? Condensed material by combining related ideas? Re-created the author’s ideas and arguments accurately and clearly and in the order in which she or he presented them?</td>
<td>Is the summary readable? Any unnecessary big words, too many long sentences, too many abstract concepts not explained in concrete terms? Author’s vocabulary is accurate, colorful, &amp; effective? Is the language appropriate? Author treats dignified subjects lightheartedly? Any surprises in the language? Is there appropriate variety in the sentences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Experience</strong></td>
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<td>Captured all of the author’s main points in order to maintain the usefulness of your objective summary? Located the key sentences and words in each paragraph of the original piece and used these as the basis of your summary? Avoided the urge to highlight all the supportive ideas used by the author of the article or chapter?</td>
<td>Is the subject interesting? Raise your curiosity about the subject? Is the subject likely to appeal to the general reader? Is there enough information? Is this a thorough treatment or a sketchy overview? Has the author supplied the reader with enough facts or enough details to achieve his or her overall purpose? Is the material worthwhile? Are the facts accurate, distort, exaggerate, or diminish the facts? Educated general reader understand the ideas without difficulty?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintained an informed but objective stance throughout the summary? Convinced the readers that you are reliable and dependable as a reader and a writer?</td>
<td>What is the author’s attitude toward the subject? Did the author knew the subject and did a good job of presenting it to the reader? Is the author fair- biased, subjective, slanted, or objective and trustworthy? Does the author present material to justify his or her stance? Find any faults in the author’s logic Author’s voice appropriate for this article? Author expresses a lively point?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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A BOOK REPORT can be organized in any of these four ways as well. The book (book title) by (author’s name), published by (publisher), (place), (date), Discusses, states that} (the topic of the book) argues that)

However, the instructor may ask that the report discuss the KEY concepts of the course found in the book. Define the concept, provide examples from the book that support the concept or don’t support the concept, discuss the importance or significance in relation to the individual examples