

Help Centres – English Support



How to Write a Summary

A summary is written in your own words. It gives the main idea or thesis and main supporting points of the original article. It does not include details or change the original meaning.

Steps in Writing a Summary

1. Prereading

- Look at the title, any headings, the main idea or thesis statement, and the topic sentences of the article. Then read the introductory and concluding paragraphs. This will give you an idea of the overall point of the article.

2. Reading

- Read the article thoroughly from start to finish. Highlight or underline any unknown words, but do not look them up in a dictionary just yet. Try to guess the meaning of the words from the context.
- Reread the article, looking up any of the words you underlined.

3. Prewriting

- Find the main idea or thesis and state it in a full sentence in your own words.
- Read the first paragraph, then write a one-sentence summary. Continue doing this for each paragraph.

4. Writing your Summary

- Write a topic sentence that states the title of the article (in quotation marks), the first and last name of the author, and the main idea or thesis of the article.
- Using the notes you made for each paragraph (prewriting), write the **main points** of the article in the order they appear in the original. **Use your own words.**

5. Revising your Summary

- Is everything in your own words? You should use no more than three words in a row from the original text. You must also use your own sentence structure; it is not enough to simply substitute words.
- Is the main idea or thesis of your summary the same as the original article?
- Did you include all the main points? Are your points clearly related?
- Check your sentence structure, grammar, spelling, or punctuation.
- Remember **NOT** to include your personal opinion in your summary.

It will help if you think about the questions **Who?, What?, Where?, When?, Why?, and How?**

Title	Record the name of the newspaper
Who	Report any facts about the people involved (names, ages, gender, occupation, etc.)
What	Give information about what happens in this article. For example, what is the main point(s), idea(s) of the article
Where	Identify the location (country, town, etc.) where the story takes place
When	Record the date, time, year, etc. of when the event takes place
Why	Give information about why this event happened. Only record information that is given in the newspaper article
How	Show details about how the event happened. Again, only include details that are given in the newspaper article

Steps in Writing a Summary of a Newspaper or Magazine Article

1. Reading:

- Read the article carefully. Don't make any notes on your first reading. Try to get a general sense of the purpose and the main points of the article.
- Reread the article and highlight or underline the main points and key vocabulary words.

2. Prewriting:

- Find the main idea of the article and state it in your own words in 1 or 2 sentences.
- List the points that support the main idea.
- Organize your list of points.

3. Writing your summary:

- Write a topic sentence that states the name and author of the article and the main idea.
- Introduce the main idea or thesis of the article in your own words.
- Using your list of points (prewriting), discuss the **main points** of the article. **Use your own words.**
- Without looking at the article or your notes, write a conclusion to your summary. Your conclusion should be a final statement that summarizes **any conclusions the author has made in the article.**

4. Revising your summary:

When you have finished your first draft, ask yourself:

- Is the main point of my summary the same as the main point of the article?
- Have I left out any essential points?
- Does my summary read smoothly?
- Are my points clearly related?