

How to write a summary

A **summary** is a brief text explaining the principal ideas and contents of a story, book, article etc. Only the main ideas and the supporting facts should be included, the original text must not be re-written. Writing a summary proves that you have clearly understood a text in English, but it may be tricky to write because it must not include too much or too little information.

Structure

- **Introduction:** an overview of the whole text
- **Body:** a selection of the principal contents and the supporting facts
- **Conclusion:** a thesis statement that communicates the significance of the text from the author's point of view.

Tips for writing a summary

Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Read the headline carefully and pay attention to any other information you can get from photographs or charts on the page. Make sure you understand the title. ■ Read the text or article to get a general idea of the subject matter as well as the author's attitude. Read straight through, at this point, you don't need to stop to look up anything that gives you trouble; just get a feel for the author's tone, style, and main idea. Don't take any notes this time. ■ Read the text again paragraph by paragraph to understand more details. Identify and underline the key words and/or the topic sentences. Identify phrases and words you do not understand and try to clarify those points with the use of a dictionary and the general meaning of the text. It is very useful an active reading with the author's purpose in mind. ■ Write the main idea of each paragraph in the margin, give a title to each paragraph summarising the content.
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Form sentences with the help of your keywords and topic phrases. For each section of the text write down the main idea in one or two well-developed sentences. ■ Write an introductory sentence containing an overview of the whole text, do not forget to mention the author's name and the title of the text. ■ At this point, your summary is done: first the introduction followed by the other sentences that make up the body. Make sure that they are in logical order. ■ Connect the sentences using suitable conjunctions to avoid too short sentences (<i>then, however, also, moreover</i>). ■ Write a final phrase: identify what the author wanted to communicate through the revision of the body of the summary. Summarise the author's point of view and do not insert any of your personal opinions (if not expressively asked). ■ Do not copy the text but paraphrase it (<i>the writer claims/suggests/states...</i>). ■ For quotations from the text remember to use quotation marks. Do not abuse quotations. ■ Use <i>Simple Present</i> or <i>Simple Past</i>. Write sentences in reported speech. ■ Do not add your own opinions and interpretations. ■ Divide your text in paragraphs. ■ Be concise: a summary should be much shorter than the original text.
Reviewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check your English grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakes.