



Writing a Summary



All I'm supposed to write is a summary? Do I just read something and write down what it's about? That sounds

...well maybe not.

A formal summary takes a little more time and effort. Why? Because it's important not only to tell what an author says, but also to capture the text's essence (how the author says what he/she says). Don't worry, though. Here are a few steps you can take to make your summary a success.

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| Read | Read (yes, that's important) the passage carefully to determine the author's structure and purpose for writing the passage. |
| Reread | Divide the passage into sections (the author's use of paragraphing may help). Label each section and underline key ideas or terms. |
| Write | On a separate sheet of paper, write a one-sentence summary of each section. Try to put the main idea in your own words. |
| Write More | Write a thesis (a one- or two-sentence summary of the entire passage) that expresses the central idea of the passage (what, who, why, where, when, and how). For a persuasive work , summarize the author's conclusion. For a descriptive work , indicate the subject of the description and its key feature(s). |
| Combine | Write the first draft of your summary by combining the thesis with your list of one-sentence summaries and any significant details from the passage (significant details would be information that, if left out, would make the summary seem like it could be about any article). |
| Check | Check your summary against the original passage and make whatever adjustments are necessary for accuracy and completeness. |
| Polish | See how your summary sounds. Check your transitions and make sure your sentences aren't short and choppy. Proofread for grammatical and mechanical mistakes. |