

How to Write a Summary

1. **Read the original multiple times**, annotating to identify:
 - The main points.
 - Supporting details, evidence, or examples. An original can be an article, book, website, movie, song, or event.
2. **Identify the original's audience and purpose.**
3. **Identify your audience and purpose for the summary.** Most of the time, your audience and purpose will be different than the original author's audience and purpose. You may have several purposes; often, the length of your summary depends on your purpose. Which type of summary will best serve your purpose?
 - A brief summary of one to two sentences (sometimes called a précis) that contains only the original author's main points.
 - A summary of one long or two short paragraphs that can set the stage for your analysis of the original's content or rhetorical analysis.
 - A summary of about 10% of the original's length that can help your audience better understand the original.
4. Keeping your purpose for writing the summary in mind, **find the most important idea or the main argument of the text** (the thesis statement). If you can't find the author's thesis statement, write the original's main point in one sentence yourself.
5. **Look at the other main points and supporting details** you found while reading.
 - Eliminate duplicates.
 - Group together points or details related to each of the original's ideas or arguments—whether or not they are together in the original. These should be grouped together in your summary.
 - Name each of your groups in one word or phrase.
6. **Rewrite the summary material you have gathered or written.** Depending on your purpose, you will write longer or shorter on each of the following elements:
 - Identify the original—author, title, and any other important information—in a heading, the opening sentence, or a source line at the end of the summary.
 - Begin the summary with the thesis of the original.
 - Decide on an order for each of your groups and write each in your own words. Quote anything taken directly from the original. Depending on the length of your summary, include or refer to important evidence.
 - By nature, summaries do not evaluate the content or style of the original.
7. **Edit carefully** to develop more specific wording, to eliminate repetitions of ideas or wording, and to correct grammatical, typographical, and spelling errors.