

ARTICLE SUMMARIES

Writing a summary requires you to read closely and paraphrase accurately for readers without access to the same article. The process below will help you write a concise, clearly organized summary. Because multiple scholars collaboratively write many journal articles, we use the word “authors.”

SCAN THE ARTICLE FOR THE “BIG PICTURE”

- Read the title and note the names of the authors: what does the title tell you about the authors’ thesis or main point?
- Read the introduction: find the authors’ thesis statement or main point, often the last sentence or two in the introduction.
- If your article has no headings, read the first sentence in each body paragraph.
- If your article has headings, identify which headings are major headings and which are subheadings.
- If the article describes a research study that the authors conducted, you may find the following major headings:
 - Review of the Literature (literature = already published research in the field),
 - Purpose (**why** the authors conducted their research),
 - Methods (**how** the authors conducted their research),
 - Findings (**what** the authors **learned** as a result of their research),
 - Limitations and Future Research (**variables** that may have kept the authors’ study from being more far-reaching, as well as **interesting questions** for further research),
 - Discussion (**the meaning of** the authors’ findings and how it contributes to the profession).
- Read the concluding paragraph(s): find the authors’ restated thesis statement (it should be similar to the thesis statement in the introduction).

REWRITE THE MATERIAL

When you are confident that you understand the authors’ main point, rewrite it as your own sentence without looking at the original. Start your new sentence by identifying your authors as the source of the information, for example:

According to Hardie and Peterson (2009), visiting the University Writing Center is like providing your paper with a dress rehearsal before the big performance, when your instructor starts reading your paper.

Pay attention to how your required documentation style cites authors used in a sentence. With revision and attention to accuracy, your sentence will become the thesis statement for your summary.

READ THE ARTICLE IN FULL

- As you read each major section or paragraph, sum up its message in a sentence or two.
- If a section has been subdivided, first compose a sentence that sums up the introduction to the section, and then compose a sentence or two that sums up each subsection.
- Your accurate rewording and summation of the authors’ sections and subsections will form the body of your summary.

WRITE THE FIRST DRAFT

Use your notes to write a first draft of your article summary. Although your notes may repeat some information because it repeats in the original article, an effective summary will mention information once, in the order in

which it makes sense for a summary. Pay close attention to your instructor's word/page limit and assignment guidelines. Strict summaries do not contain specific examples or details from the article or comments by the summary writer because, by definition, summaries communicate condensed information about the original article in a short space. Save your ideas for assignments that invite you **to analyze or critique**.

CHECK YOUR DRAFT AGAINST THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE FOR ACCURACY

- Do you accurately sum up the main idea of the article into a meaningful first sentence of your own words?
- Do you accurately re-word the authors' supporting points using the same sections/subsections as the original but without repeating information?
- Do you quote important terms when appropriate?
- Does your summary make sense as a stand-alone text?

REVISE

Revise, checking for conciseness, accuracy, control, and sound sentence and paragraph structure (topic sentences and supporting facts).

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