

Summarizing

What is a summary?

Summarizing is an important skill that you will need throughout college and your career. Summarizing is condensing an entire text, speech, or film down to its main ideas, and putting it in your own words. Summarizing can help you better remember the main ideas and check your understanding of what you've read, seen, or heard.

Guidelines for summarizing

While reading	Make note of the thesis statement, topic sentences, and main supporting ideas. It may help to underline or highlight these, or take notes while reading.
Plan your writing	Consider your purpose and audience. Are you writing for yourself or others? If for others, consider how detailed you need to be and if you need to define specific terms.
Start writing	Include the author and title. Write out the main idea in your own words. Explain the author's point of view.
Continue writing	Incorporate all of the main ideas by putting them in your own words. Present the ideas in the same order as the author does. Remember to keep the summary brief.
What to leave out	Leave out your personal opinion, interpretation, or analysis unless you are specifically asked to include it. Do not include unimportant or minor details, even if they seem interesting.

Do include

Use attributive phrases such as, "According to..." If you are writing a formal assignment or publication, include a citation.

Examples

Original source to be summarized: “Before 1994, diabetes in children was generally caused by a genetic disorder – only about 5 percent of childhood diabetes cases were obesity-related, or Type 2, diabetes. Today, according to the National Institutes of Health, Type 2 diabetes accounts for at least 30 percent of all new childhood cases of diabetes in this country. Not surprisingly, money spent to treat diabetes has skyrocketed, too. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that diabetes accounted for \$2.6 billion in health care costs in 1969. Today’s number is an unbelievable \$100 billion a year.” (Taken from David Zinczenko's "Don't Blame the Eater")

Sample summary: In author's article “Don’t Blame the Eater,” David Zinczenko supports their position on the fast food industry by comparing today’s rates of Type 2 diabetes to those prior to 1994. David makes it clear that instances of Type 2 diabetes have increased dramatically, as has the cost of preventing the spread of this disease.

Sources

Excelsior University. "Summarizing." *Excelsior Online Reading Lab*, 2023, owl.excelsior.edu/orc/what-to-do-after-reading/summarizing/.

Simon Fraser University. "Summarizing: How to Effectively Summarize the Work of Others." *Student Learning Commons*, 2022, lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/writing/sources/summarizing.

