

WHAT IS A SUMMARY

"A summary, also known as an abstract, precis, or synopsis, is a shortened version of a text that highlights its key points. The word "summary" comes from the Latin, "sum."

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KEEP IN MIND

1. Reread the passage , jotting down a few key words
2. State the main point in your own words and be objective. Don't mix your reaction with the summary

Randall VanderMey, et al.

Step 1: Read the text for its main points.
Step 2: Reread carefully and make a descriptive outline.
Step 3: Write out the text's thesis or main point.
Step 4: Identify the text's major divisions or chunks. Each division develops one of the stages needed to make the whole main point.
Step 5: Try summarizing each part in one or two sentences.
Step 6: Now combine your summaries of the parts into a coherent whole, creating a condensed version of the text's main ideas in your own words."

(John C. Bean, Virginia Chappell, and Alice M. Gillam, *Reading Rhetorically*. Pearson Education, 2004)

EXAMPLE

A Summary of Shakespeare's "Hamlet"

"One way of discovering the overall pattern of a piece of writing is to summarize it in your own words. The act of summarizing is much like stating the plot of a play. For instance, if you were asked to summarize the story of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet,' you might say:

It's the story of a young prince of Denmark who discovers that his uncle and his mother have killed his father, the former king. He plots to get revenge, but in his obsession with revenge he drives his sweetheart to madness and suicide, kills her innocent father,

and in the final scene poisons and is poisoned by her brother in a duel, causes his mother's death, and kills the guilty king, his uncle.

This summary contains a number of dramatic elements: a cast of characters (the prince; his uncle, mother, and father; his sweetheart; her father, and so on), a scene (Elsinore Castle in Denmark), instruments (poisons, swords), and actions (discovery, dueling, killing)."

Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike.

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