

WRITING A SUMMARY

A summary demonstrates your comprehension of information and ideas. It usually briefly restates in your own words the content of a passage. It should focus on the central idea and indicate all the main points in the passage that support the central idea, as well as the relationship between the ideas, including their order and emphasis.

1. Read the assigned passage(s) carefully.
2. Reread, but this time divide the passage into sections or stages of thought and label each section. Underline key ideas, terms.
3. Write one-sentence summaries on a separate sheet of paper, one for each stage of thought.
4. Write a one-sentence summary of the entire passage. Here you want to express the central idea of the passage as determined from the steps above.
5. Write the first draft of your summary by combining the topic sentence from step 4 with the information from step 3. Eliminate any repetition.
6. Revise. Make sure transitional words are provided (you can find these in a grammar and style handbook under “transitions”; they include words like: therefore, however, furthermore, and so on. Avoid series of short, choppy sentences. Check for grammar and punctuation.

Adapted from Behrens and Rosen, *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*
Little Brown, 1982.