

WRITING A SUMMARY

A **summary** is a brief, concise description of a text, which pays close attention to the author's main points, principal examples, and overall conclusions, as well as key terms and point of view.

Avoid simply providing a laundry list of the author's points. Instead, your summary should demonstrate how the author's ideas fit together. It should explain the implicit slant or point of view of the text, identifying the author's assumptions and purpose(s) in writing the piece. Your summary should also pay attention to the underlying structure of the text, as well as attend to the tone and context of the piece.

Although you will be putting the author's argument into your own words, you need to avoid distorting or judging the author's position.

Putting the author's main ideas into your own words is crucial. Brief quotations are acceptable, but quote sparingly.

To recapitulate, follow these guidelines when summarizing:

DO:

- Express the author's ideas **in your own words**.
- Present his or her **main** thoughts, arguments, and conclusions.
- Give the main examples and key terms used by the author.
- Show how the ideas fit together.
- Explain the author's point of view and his or her purpose in writing the piece.
- Take into account the text's underlying structure, tone, and context.
- **Be brief.**
- Quote sparingly.

DON'T:

- DON'T distort the author's ideas.
- DON'T judge the author's opinions.
- DON'T include your own opinions or responses to the text.
- DON'T repeat the author's words or phrasing unless quoting.