

COMPOSING SUMMARIES

Oftentimes, a college student is required to read a text and compose summaries of material for the purpose of study.

A summary is usually a condensed (or shortened) version of a longer text, which contains only the most important details of the text. These details may include: important names, dates, terms, statistics, events, ideas/concepts, characters, settings, etc.

Ideally, you should include the most important information from the text, which helps the reader to understand the full/longer text without having to actually read it.

Moreover, a summary, unlike a novel, may mention the ending of a story or the results of an experiment. In other words, summaries do not keep the reader in suspense; you can “give away” the ending.

STEPS IN COMPOSING A SUMMARY

1. Read the full text or longer version of the text.
2. Re-read the text and take notes. Make sure to keep in mind any significant details or movement in the text. Note any facts, statistics, findings, etc.
3. Take your notes, and place the information in appropriate order (e.g. chronologically, event by event, presenting the problem then the solution, etc.)
4. Make sure to create transitions between ideas. Consider using conjuncts (e.g., first, second, third, etc. – if needed).
5. Rephrase (or carefully write) the material in a “reader-friendly” way.
6. Edit, edit, and edit again! Trim unnecessary “fluff” from your summary when possible.

SUMMARY CHARACTERISTICS

+Summaries try not to repeat details

+Summaries usually list the author and name of the source in the first line of your summary (not for abstracts or other complex types of summaries)

EX:

Aldo Leopold’s The Sand Country Almanac is about _____.

+Summaries keep in the third-person point of view.

- +Summaries try not to be biased (do not inform the reader of your like/dislike for the material/text).
- +Summaries convey only facts.
- +Summaries do not contain speculation, commentary, or give opinions.
- +The language should be familiar to the reader/audience.
- +All abbreviations and complicated (or new) terms should be defined.
- +Extended/Longer Summaries usually provide the bibliographic citation from the original source.