

Summary

A summary is a shortened version of a speech, news report, magazine article, profile, or section of a textbook that you write in your own words. In a summary, you show that you understand the original piece by highlighting its main idea and most important points.

Steps for Writing a Summary

1. Read the source carefully once or twice to develop a general understanding of its theme or message. If the source is a news report, take note of its headline. If the source is an article or section of a textbook, take note of its title and any subheadings. These will help you identify quickly what content is in the source.

2. Identify the thesis statement in the source, if applicable. In some cases, this appears as the first or last sentence in the first paragraph. Write down this sentence word for word on a separate sheet of paper. Next, read this sentence again to make sure you understand what it's saying. Then rewrite it in your own words.

If your source is a newspaper or magazine article that begins with an anecdote (short, personal account) or other hook to pull you into the story, ask yourself, "What idea is this writer's beginning trying to get across to me?" Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

3. Identify the topic sentences or main points in the source, ignoring supporting details such as examples or quotations. Write these points on your sheet of paper in your own words and in the order in which they appear in the source. Along with what you've written in Step 2, you now have a draft of your summary.

4. Reread the source to make sure your draft summary accurately reflects the original.

5. Revise your draft, if necessary, and then write a final copy of your summary. The final copy should:

- be written in your own words

- reflect only what's in the original source, with no thoughts of your own included
- be significantly shorter than the original by about 80 to 90 percent

What follows is a summary of the feature story that begins on page 109.

Sample Summary

"Timberlea teen helps, two shoes at a time" by Joel Jacobson

This feature news story is about grade 9 student Matthew Burke trying to find footwear for homeless men at the Metro Turning Point men's shelter in Halifax. An active and able student in Beechville, Nova Scotia, Matthew learned of the need for winter clothing from a news story about Metro Turning Point, which he then visited. He was so affected by what he saw that he took action. He decided to focus on men's shoes and try to raise public awareness of the homeless. The article lists the many hours invested, and the results: donations of all kinds, not just footwear.