

Steps to Writing an Effective Summary

1. **Read** the article **critically**, multiple times.
 - First, just read the **title, introduction, and conclusion** to determine the author's thesis.
 - Second, look at the **topic sentences** of body paragraphs to find the main supporting points.
 - Finally, read the whole article, and review as necessary to clarify your understanding.
2. **Annotate the article. (Optional: Outline after annotating.)**
 - Make notes in margins (label **thesis, SPs**, etc.)
 - Underline, highlight, circle, etc.

Thesis: The title usually provides the best clue. Also, check the **introduction** and **conclusion**.

Supporting points (SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4, etc.) that belong in a summary:

INCLUDE claims & reasons that support the thesis:

To find these, try repeating to yourself: "The author claims (thesis) because ..."

- Include **counterarguments** as main reasons.
- Include any contextual information (when, where, who, etc.) that a reader would need to know. **IMPORTANT:** Write for an audience who has NOT seen the article!

OMIT detailed evidence: (facts, statistics, examples, etc. that prove the main points)

- **Leave out** most evidence! Specific details do NOT belong in a summary.
- Evidence is in an article to **illustrate** and offer detail about a supporting point.
- When you read particular names / numbers / dates / stories / examples / etc., ask yourself, what is the **major idea** these **minor** details are meant to illustrate? The idea is more important to include than the names, numbers, etc.

3. **Write the opening sentence** of your summary paragraph in APA style.

- Follow this pattern to include **ALL** the necessary elements in **ONE** opening sentence:

In "Article title," Author's First and Last Name (publication year) reporting verb + that + author's thesis as a complete statement in your own words.

Here is a sample using this pattern:

In "Abolish the school boards," Margaret Wentle (2015) declares that many parents could run their children's schools more effectively than the current professional committee at the Toronto District School Board.

Also, refer to the sample summary paragraph handout.

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4. Express the main supporting points in your own words.

Next, use your annotated article to write out a summary. You may choose to start with an outline (argument map), or go straight to writing the summary paragraph. Use these strategies:

- **Condense and interpret:** Choose a key section (e.g. one body paragraph) and express how it supports the thesis in your own words, leaving out unnecessary details.
- **Paraphrase:** Choose a quoted phrase or sentence of the article that communicates a main supporting idea, and express that entire idea using **strong** paraphrasing (see checklist).
- **Do not copy.** Copying more than three content words in a row is plagiarism!
- **Do not quote** main points in a summary. Instead, show that you can express the author's ideas accurately in your own words.

5. Add coherence: Incorporate transitions and signal phrases.

Purpose / Use	Transitions that <u>start</u> a sentence	Transitions that connect ideas <u>within</u> a sentence
To add a new idea	<i>Also, In addition, Moreover,</i>	<i>and</i>
To introduce an effect	<i>Therefore, As a result,</i>	<i>so</i>
To introduce a cause	<i>Because</i>	<i>because</i>
To introduce a contrast	<i>However, Nevertheless, Although</i>	<i>but, yet, although</i>
To emphasize an idea	<i>In fact, Indeed, Not only... but also...</i>	

Signal Phrase		
Transition	Author	Reporting verb
<i>First,</i>	<i>Smith</i>	<i>argues that ...</i>
<i>Also,</i>	<i>the author</i>	<i>claims that ...</i>
<i>In addition,</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>states that ...</i>
	<i>Smith</i>	<i>insists that ...</i>
	<i>The author</i>	<i>contends that ...</i>
	<i>Smith</i>	<i>acknowledges ...</i>

6. Revise, proofread, and edit as necessary.

Use the **summary checklist** before you submit your work to be evaluated. Try reading aloud slowly to catch any grammar errors, missing words, etc.

7. Add an APA reference after the summary.