

Summarizing and Paraphrasing

AECC English

Summarizing

- It is very difficult to remember the complete contents of long texts. For that reason it is often advisable to make notes of essential information in the text. A summary is a brief overview of an entire discussion or argument. You might summarize a whole research paper or conversation in a single paragraph, for example, or with a series of bullet points, using your own words and style.
- People often summarize when the original material is long, or to emphasize key facts or points. Summaries leave out detail or examples that may distract the reader from the most important information, and they simplify complex arguments, grammar and vocabulary.
- The result is a short outline of the text containing all its important aspects. The length of the summary largely depends on the density of the text. The average length of a good summary is about one-third of the original text, but summaries of detailed texts may be longer.
- The following steps can be taken when summarizing a text:

Step 1:

Familiarize yourself with the material: After you have read the text or a section of it, you can start summarizing. The length of the section you can easily read through at a time, in an attempt to summarize the text in parts, depends on the structure and the complexity of the text. With reports, it is often a good idea to read one section and then summarize. Newspaper articles are often best read as a whole before starting with the summary.

Step 2:

Select important information: You should go through each paragraph, sentence by sentence, asking yourself which information is absolutely essential to the argument. You should write down complete sentences as much as possible. Jot

down your points clearly or you will have to read the original text all over again. An alternative is to underline or highlight important sentences or phrases.

Step 3:

You should try to condense long and complex sentences into much shorter ones. Use active sentences as much as possible and avoid adjuncts. Practise economy with words. Avoid descriptions if they can be summarized in one word. For example, do not write ‘The state exclusively controls and possesses the trade in stamps’, but write ‘The state monopolizes the trade in stamps.’

Step 4:

Insert links between sentences and paragraphs: Make sure that the connection between sentences is clear and logical and that each group of sentences smoothly fits in one paragraph. This can be done by inserting link words such as therefore, nevertheless, but, however, because, on the other hand, etc. Sentences can also be linked by relative pronouns, for example, who, which, whose, and that. Using the correct links means that your summary becomes more logical and coherent.

Step 5:

Adjust the length of the summary: If you have to write a summary as part of an assignment and you are assigned a maximum number of words, count the words after writing it out. Depending on whether your word count exceeds or falls below the given number, you can leave out unessential information or add important information.

Paraphrasing

- To paraphrase, or paraphrasing, is to rewrite something using different words without changing the original meaning. This is what is usually meant by the phrase ‘in your own words’.
- The paraphrase should be clearer and more easily understood than the original and is often about the same length. Paraphrases are a good alternative to using direct quotations.
- In your writing, you may make a paraphrase of:

- a. short sections of text (e.g. phrases, sentences)
 - b. longer sections of text (e.g. a paragraph)
 - c. information that explains tables or figures.
- The following steps can be taken when summarizing a text:

Step 1.

Read the text carefully. Underline, or note, any important subject-specific words.

Step 2.

Look up any difficult words, and try to find synonyms for them.

Step 3.

Try to find different ways of expressing the information in the groups of words (phrases).

Step 4.

Rewrite each sentence. Try to simplify the sentence structure and the vocabulary without changing the meaning.

Step 5.

Put your text out of sight and write your paraphrase from memory.

Step 6.

Revise what you have written, comparing it to the original. Your paraphrase should clarify the original, but be written clearly in your own words.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUMMARIZING AND PARAPHRASING

Summarizing is used;

- When only the main ideas of the writer are to be identified.
- When only an overview of the whole work is required.
- When simplification is required.
- When only the main highlights of the work have to be mentioned.

Paraphrasing is used;

- When another writer's work has to be used.
- When quotes are not used in the text.
- When the ideas have a greater relevance than the style of writing.
- When you want to simplify the work of another person.