1. How to Summarise & Paraphrase

By following these 10 points and practising you will increase your understanding of a written text and be able to write a good summary or paraphrase.

1. Identify the purpose of the summary/paraphrase: Is it for your notes, for a critical review, to include as evidence supporting your understanding of a topic?

2. Read the original carefully. Check the meanings of words you are unfamiliar with. Read the text at least twice or till you are certain you understand it.

3. Select the important idea/s and information by highlighting the original or taking separate notes. Select the important definitions of key terms that you may need to include.

4. Select the main claim/thesis of the text to be summarised/paraphrased. Even if this is not explicitly expressed, try to write your own understanding of the author's claim

5. Gather groups of details, examples and minor ideas under more general terms, a phrase or single word.

6. Do not include repeated ideas/information from the original.

7. Include the attitude of the authors. Are they critical, praising, certain, uncertain?

8. After writing a summary or paraphrase, check that the meaning and attitude of the original text is unaltered.

9. Use quotation marks (" ") for unique/specialist phrases you have retained from the original.

10. Always keep accurate bibliographical details for intext references/footnotes and your   Reference list.

2. Summarising: condensing, or shortening, a reading selection without changing its overall meaning.

Reasons for summarising might include:

    demonstrating your understanding of a reading

    establishing the ideas you will discuss and/or analyse in an essay

    introducing the reading selection you will discuss in an essay

    informing a reader (for example, when summarising a source that the reader has not read)

    for yourself (i.e. not for an assignment to turn in), in order to make notes about a book you have read while doing research for a paper or exam – it also helps you find out if you have really understood the book and know what the main point is

EXAMPLES
Summarising nonfiction

    Generally, your goal is to summarise the writer's opinion about the subject being discussed. You need to distinguish between main ideas and secondary details.

    Sometimes you will find the main idea is already clearly stated within one sentence. Rewrite the thought in your own words to summarise it.

ORIGINAL TEXT: For me the most interesting thing about a solitary life, and mine has been that for the last twenty years, is that it becomes increasingly rewarding. When I can wake up and watch the sun rise over the ocean, as I do most days, and know that I have an entire day ahead, uninterrupted, in which to write a few pages, take a walk with my dog, lie down in the afternoon for a long think (why does one think better in a horizontal position?), read and listen to music, I am flooded with happiness. -

* May Sarton, "The Rewards of Living a Solitary Life"*

SUMMARY: *Living alone is a joyful experience in that it becomes more fulfilling as time passes.*

    More often, though, you must search through the reading and combine several sentences that contain important ideas in order to summarise the overall statement being made in the passage.

ORIGINAL TEXT: *There's no doubt that American education does not meet high standards in such basic skills as mathematics and language. And we realize that our youngsters are ignorant of Latin, put Mussolini in the same category as Dostoevski, cannot recite the Periodic Table by heart. Would we, however, prefer to stuff the developing little heads of our children with hundreds of geometry problems, the names of rivers in Brazil and 50 lines from The Canterbury Tales? Do we really want to retard their impulses, frustrate their opportunities for selfexpression?*

* Kie Ho, "We Should Cherish Our Children's Freedom to Think"*

SUMMARY: Although American education does not meet high standards in certain basic skills, it does provide valuable opportunities for self-expression.

In the first example, the main idea is contained in the first sentence. However, in the second example, if you just summarised the first sentence, you would say the main point is that American education does not meet high standards in certain basic skills. This is part of Ho's argument, but as you continue reading, you realize that his main point is in fact to show the advantages of the American educational system.

Note that in both summaries, the details are left out (the sun rising, walking the dog, learning the Periodic Table by heart, etc.).

3. Summaries: A summary is an overview of a text. The main idea is given, but details, examples, and formalities are left out. Used with longer texts, the main aim of summarising is to reduce or condense a text to its most important ideas. Summarising is a useful skill for making notes from readings and lectures, writing abstracts/synopses, and incorporating material in assignments.

►**How to do it**: The amount of detail you include in a summary will vary according to the length of the original text, how much information you need, and how selective you are.
- Start by reading a short extract and highlighting the main points as you read.
- Re-read the text and make notes of the main points, leaving out examples, evidence, etc.
- Without the text, rewrite your notes in your own words; restate the main idea at the beginning, plus all major points.

►**When to summarise**: Summarise long sections of work, like a long paragraph, page, or chapter
- To outline the main points of someone else's work in your own words, without details or examples.
- To include an author's ideas using fewer words than the original text.
- To briefly give examples of several differing points of view on a topic.
- To support claims in, or provide evidence for, your writing.

4. <u>Additional sources:</u>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/reading/summarising/index.shtml
http://www.readingquest.org/strat/summarize.html
http://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lsu/content/4_writingSkills/writing_tuts/summarising_LL/index.html
http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/information-technology/sources/2.5.3.xml
http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/student/learningAdvisors/summarise.asp
http://www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/curriculum/literacyresources/index.php?category_id=73&s=!B121cf29d70ec8
http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/notetake/note17_sum.html
http://www.langcent.manchester.ac.uk/elplinks/academic/writing/paraphrasing/
http://www.kcl.ac.uk/teares/nmvc/studyskills/referencing/page_07.htm
http://www.uefap.com/reading/exercise/menu_nt.htm