

SUMMARY

- A condensed version of a longer text
- Often helps to introduce the background/previous research
- Not a rewrite! Not a paraphrase!
- Use your own words
- Focus on the main idea and relevant details
- Highly valued in academia:
 - Shows you understand the subject
 - Shows your ability to focus on the important points
 - Shows you have grasped a wide range of sources

A) Summarizing Information

Which of these five texts seems best as a general background paragraph for a paper arguing that energy drinks are a potential public health problem? Explain your choice.

1. In the U.S., 200 new energy drink brands were launched in the 12-month period ending July 2007 (Packaged Facts, 2007). From 2002 to 2006, the average annual growth rate in energy drink sales was 55% (Packaged Facts, 2007) (Fig. 1). In 2006, the total U.S. retail market value for energy drinks (from all sources) was approximately \$5.4 billion and has shown a similar annual growth rate over this same period (47%) (Packaged Facts, 2007). These drinks vary widely in both caffeine content (ranging from 50 to 505 mg per can or bottle) and caffeine concentration (ranging from 2.5 to 171 mg per fluid ounce).

2. According to Packaged Facts (as cited in Reissig et al., 2009), between 2006 and 2007 hundreds of energy drink brands were introduced into the U.S. market. This was likely a result of producers recognizing energy drinks as a very profitable product with growth potential. In fact, the average annual growth rate in energy drink sales was 55% (Packaged Facts, 2007) (Fig. 1). Research by Packaged Facts (as cited in Reissig et al., 2009) shows that the total U.S. retail market value for energy drinks (from all sources) was estimated to be \$5.4 billion in 2006 and has shown a similar annual growth rate over this same period (47%). These drinks vary widely in both caffeine content (ranging from 50 to 505 mg per can or bottle) and caffeine concentration (ranging from 2.5 to 171 mg per fluid ounce). Since the long-term effects of these high levels of caffeine are not known, there is a chance that consumption of these drinks may be harmful.

3. In 2002, sales of energy drinks in the United States were just over \$100 million. By 2006, however, this figure was \$700 million. Although this tremendous growth is welcome news for producers and retailers, it is unclear what the long-term health consequences may be (Reissig et al., 2009). This uncertainty may even encourage higher levels of consumption, leading to possible health issues.

4. Hundreds of new energy drink brands have been introduced into the market over the past decade (Johnson, 2006). Along with this growth, sales have also dramatically increased, reaching a market value of billions of dollars in the U.S. alone. Clearly, the demand for caffeine, which varies widely in these drinks, is insatiable and a public health crisis is about to emerge.

5. Energy drink consumption is rapidly growing, which is a source of concern among health professionals (Reissig et al., 2009). Specifically, researchers do not know what the long- and short term effects of caffeine and other additives in these drinks may be (Reissig, 2009). Thus, we may soon be facing a public health crisis.

B) Summary as a Genre

Look at the hypothetical student's summary below, and identify the parts that relate to the background/context, aim, method, results and conclusion of the report.

- A) Which sentence(s) of the summary relate(s) to:
- Background/context
 - Aim
 - Method
 - Results
 - Conclusion?
- B) Do you consider this abstract to be balanced?

(1) Approaches to e-learning range from instructional (one-way) to collaborative and contested (two-way). (2) The existing literature is quite mixed as to the efficacy of the different approaches, with strong and distinct preferences between individuals in some studies. (3) The experience of students completing a life sciences e-learning module was investigated to reveal the extent to which different e-learning approaches were favored by students. (4) A questionnaire census of all students (n = 85) was carried out immediately after students completed the module, with a stratified sample of students (n = 10) being interviewed within a week. (5) Analysis of questionnaire returns and interview themes reveals a complex pattern, with sizeable percentages of students favoring all approaches, but with strong preferences among a few students (n = 14). (6) The findings largely agree with the reviewed literature. (131 words)

Exercise 1: The Case of Piltdown Man (Summary revision)

- A) Complete the words in the text about a scientific hoax.
- B) Summarize the text in roughly 3 sentences.

There has been co_____ interest in the case of Piltdown Man, not for what it reveals about the evolution of mankind but for the way in which it demonstrates so cl_____ the im_____ powerful desire in humans to, as Carmichael (2004:2) describes it, "believe against the facts". When Charles Dawson announced in 1912 that fragments of an early human skull had been discovered at the Piltdown gravel pit, many of his colleagues in the scientific community were profoundly sc_____, responding to his pro_____ that the find might represent the "missing link" between humans and apes with a strong measure of disbelief.

Despite these doubts and the publication of a ca _____ documented article (Waterson, 1913) within a year of the discovery, arguing that Piltdown Man's jawbone was that of an ape rather than a human, some forty years were to pass before it was established con _____ by Oakley and Clark (1953) that the skull was a forgery. This time lapse can be explained in part by the fi _____ competitive atmosphere in which contemporary paleontologists operated. As Brooker (2001) suggests, there was a wi _____ assumption that, after imp _____ contributions to the science of evolution had been made by fossil discoveries in Germany and France, Britain's turn had come.