

Lecture Three: How to Summarize a Scientific Text

Writing Summaries:

Writing good summaries requires accurate reading and ability to find the main idea and most important supporting evidence in a piece of writing. Summaries are always quite a bit shorter than the original texts, perhaps 75 percent shorter. Sometimes, particularly for a book, the summary is much shorter than the original, perhaps 99 percent shorter. When you write a summary, you give your readers an idea of the content of the article or book and save them the time and trouble of reading the entire original.

To write a good summary, keep the following in mind:

- Read the original text carefully. Then try to understand its main subject or purpose.
- Read it again to understand it in more detail.
- Underline the key words in the topic.
- Underline the relevant parts of the text.
- Write the points down in note form, using your own words – Make the notes as brief as possible.
- Organize the information in logical fashion.
- Avoid repetition. i.e. don't repeat information, even if it's repeated in the text.
- Write your summary.
If you want to start with an introductory sentence, make it brief.
Using linking words/phrases and paraphrases where possible. Include only information which is relevant to the topic.
- The first sentence or two of your summary should contain the author's thesis, or central concept, stated in your own words.
- Use key vocabulary from the text when you can.
- Use your own wording. Occasionally, however, a phrase in the original may be especially striking, interesting, or controversial. In this case, you may use the author's exact words.
- Don't include your own ideas or comments. The summary should include only the author's ideas.
- Make sure your summary is within the set word limit.
- Edit your summary, checking spelling, punctuation etc.

Try to be relevant, concise and coherent.