



SUMMARIZING

Definition of Summary

- “an abstract, abridgment, or compendium especially of a preceding discourse” – Merriam Webster
- A summary, also known as an abstract, precis, or synopsis, is a shortened version of a text that highlights its key points. The word "summary" comes from the Latin, "sum."
- A summary is a synthesis of the key ideas of a piece of writing, restated in your own words - i.e., paraphrased. You may write a summary as a stand-alone assignment or as part of a longer paper.
- An Abstract is a Summary
- A Review is NOT a Summary

Why Summarize?

- Summaries allow people to
 - Determine whether an article is relevant to their research
 - Determine the contents of a piece of media that you might consume
 - Understand the main points of a text quickly and succinctly
- By Writing a summary, you
 - Can provide an easy way for someone to determine if your text is relevant for them
 - Can show your understanding of a text
 - Can help you understand a text, whether it be one wrote yourself or not
 - Can market your article

Characteristics of a Good Summary

- The summary should cover the original as a whole.
- The material should be presented in a neutral fashion.
- The summary should be a condensed version of the material, presented in your own words.
- Cite the author and title of the text.
- Indicate the main ideas of the text. Use direct quotations of keywords, phrases, or sentences.
- **Include author tags.** ("According to Ehrenreich" or "as Ehrenreich explains")
- **Avoid summarizing specific examples or data** unless they help illustrate the thesis or main idea of the text.
- **Report the main ideas as objectively as possible.**

Steps to Writing a Summary

- Read the original text carefully
- Mark key points
- Make notes of key points
- Write the summary from your notes
- Review the summary

Techniques in Writing a Summary

- Write a descriptive outline of the text
- Skim the text first in order to understand the general purpose of the text and to recognize subheadings and important information
- Write out the text's thesis or main point.
- Find sections, divisions, or chunks of the text ,through subheadings or otherwise
- Try to summarize each section in one or two paragraphs
- Combine the sectional summaries

Video on how to write a good summary

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGWO1ldEhtQ>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llwbpAQSDC8>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsB73dRuGcE>



Examples

America has changed dramatically during recent years. Not only has the number of graduates in traditional engineering disciplines such as mechanical, civil, electrical, chemical, and aeronautical engineering declined, but in most of the premier American universities engineering curricula now concentrate on and encourage largely the study of engineering science. As a result, there are declining offerings in engineering subjects dealing with infrastructure, the environment, and related issues, and greater concentration on high technology subjects, largely supporting increasingly complex scientific developments. While the latter is important, it should not be at the expense of more traditional engineering.

Rapidly developing economies such as China and India, as well as other industrial countries in Europe and Asia, continue to encourage and advance the teaching of engineering. Both China and India, respectively, graduate six and eight times as many traditional engineers as does the United States. Other industrial countries at minimum maintain their output, while America suffers an increasingly serious decline in the number of engineering graduates and a lack of well-educated engineers. (169 words)

(Source: Excerpted from Frankel, E.G. (2008, May/June) Change in education: The cost of sacrificing fundamentals. MIT Faculty Newsletter, XX, 5, 13.)

- from Academic Integrity at MIT Handbook

One Paragraph Summary

- In a 2008 Faculty Newsletter article, "Change in Education: The cost of sacrificing fundamentals," MIT Professor Emeritus Ernst G. Frankel expresses his concerns regarding the current state of American engineering education. He notes that the number of students focusing on traditional areas of engineering has decreased while the number interested in the high-technology end of the field has increased. Frankel points out that other industrial nations produce far more traditionally-trained engineers than we do, and believes we have fallen seriously behind. (81 words)
- from Academic Integrity at MIT Handbook

Why is it a good summary?

- The summary identifies the writer, the date of publication, and the source, and restates the key ideas using original wording. The summary reports on the author's point of view, but reports this neutrally.
- - from Academic Integrity at MIT Handbook

One Line Summary

- MIT Professor Emeritus Ernst G. Frankel (2008) has called for a return to a course of study that emphasizes the traditional skills of engineering, noting that the number of American engineering graduates with these skills has fallen sharply when compared to the number coming from other countries. (47 words)
- - from Academic Integrity at MIT Handbook

Why is it a good summary?

- This one-line summary identifies the writer and synthesizes the key ideas. A short summary like this might appear in the literature review of research paper in which the student gathers together the findings or opinions of scholars on a given subject.
- - from Academic Integrity at MIT Handbook

Thank you for your attention

Sources

- <https://depts.washington.edu/owrc/Handouts/How%20to%20Write%20a%20Summary.pdf>
- Nordquist, Richard. (2020, February 11). What Is a Written Summary? Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/summary-composition-1692160>
- <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/summary>
- MIT, Academic Integrity at MIT, A Handbook for Students. Retrieved from <https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/academic-writing/summarizing> on 9 March 2020