

Rhetorical Précis Writing

A rhetorical précis analyzes both the **content** (the what) and the **delivery** (the how) of a unit of spoken or written discourse. It is a highly structured **four-sentence paragraph blending summary and analysis**.

1. In one sentence give the following:
 - a. name of the author, title of the work, date in parenthesis;
 - b. a rhetorically accurate verb (such as "assert," "argue," "deny," "refute," "prove," "disprove," "explain," etc.);
 - c. a **that** clause containing the major claim (thesis statement) of the work.
2. In one sentence give an explanation of how the author develops and supports the author's thesis (major claim).
3. In one sentence give a statement of the author's purpose, followed by an "in order" phrase.
4. In one sentence give a description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience (tone).

Verb Bank

Describes	Persuades	Condemns	Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confides • conveys • compares • contrasts • describes • discloses • divulges • demonstrates • defines • discusses • elucidates • explains • employs • explores • illustrates • implies • informs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjures • advances • advises • argues • asserts • begs • beseeches • cajoles • claims • commands • counsels • declares • decrees • demands • dictates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • directs • encourages • entreats • espouses • exhorts • implores • mandates • justifies • persuades • suggests • proposes • recommends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complains • condemns • criticizes • critiques • decries • laments • insinuates • refuses • rejects • mocks • satirizes • sneers

(Source: Adapted from V. Stevenson AP Language and Composition, 2016)

Example: Charles S. Peirce's article, "The Fixation of Belief" (1877), asserts that humans have psychological and social mechanisms designed to protect and cement (or "fix") our beliefs. Peirce backs this claim up with descriptions of four methods of fixing belief, pointing out the effectiveness and potential weaknesses of each method. Peirce's purpose is to point out the ways that people commonly establish their belief systems in order to jolt the awareness of the reader into considering how their own belief system may be the product of such methods and to consider what Peirce calls "the method of science" as a progressive alternative to the other three. Given the technical language used in the article, Peirce is writing to an well-educated audience with some knowledge of philosophy and history and an openness to other ways of thinking.

(Source: Adapted from http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/rhetorical-precis/sample/peirce_sample_precis_click.html)