

Summarizing an Article: A Quick Guide

An article summary is a common assignment in college writing classes. Here is a step-by-step procedure for producing such a summary:

- 1) Read the article, then read it again slowly. Identify **the main point** of the entire article.
- 2) Write this main point down in your own words on a separate sheet of paper.
- 3) Read the article yet one more time. **Annotate**, that is, make notes on the text as you go. Underline key terms and sentences. In the margins (both sides), write a summative (nutshelling) note in your own words of the content of each paragraph. This will ensure that your comprehension of the article is complete and correct.
- 4) From your margin notes, identify the **major supporting points** of the article. On the same sheet where you've written the main point, write down in your own words and in complete sentences these major supporting points.
- 5) On a fresh sheet of paper, combine the main point with the major supporting points into paragraph form, inserting any **transitional words and phrases** that may be needed. (Google "transitional words.")
- 6) You now have a draft of your summary. Review your draft and the original article together, going back and forth between them many times, to make sure that your summary adheres to the "guiding principles" stated below. Revise and polish.

Guiding Principles

In the end, the finished summary should be

- 1) Comprehensive (i.e., complete--all the essentials are there, in as narrow or broad brush as needed under the circumstances)
- 2) Concise (i.e., efficient--only the essentials are there, with all details, asides, and author commentaries dispensed with)
- 3) Accurate (i.e., faithful to the original, with no distortion, no elaboration or commentary within the summary by the summarizer).