

Effective Summary Skills

This handout is a summary of your learning on **making an effective summary** and writing an **expository paragraph**.

Step One : Identify Main Ideas

- make a note next to each paragraph - what is the paragraph about?
- once you have notes, review them together - what is the overall topic the article is discussing?
- does the article have an opinion on the topic? if so, what is it?
 - is it *judgemental*? (“They did this, and they should never have been able to...”)
 - does it *support* the idea? (“They did this, and it seems like it’s been really positive...”)
 - does it *apologize* for it? (“They did this, and although people claim it might hurt certain groups, it’s actually much better for everyone...”)

Step Two : Eliminate Minor Ideas

- make a list of the most common ideas in the article - use your notes!
- highlight or circle ideas you **need** to know to understand the article
- put an X next to information that you don’t absolutely need to know

Step Three : Watch for Transition Words

- stay focused on your highlights - where does the author use transition words?
- if the author uses transition words **and** you are keeping information from both, make sure you are using transition words in your summary, too!

Step Four : Re-Order

- sometimes ideas don’t fit together anymore
- go through your own highlighted main ideas and put them in an order that would make more sense to your reader

Step Five : Clean Out Your Opinion

- a summary should be a neutral retelling
- go through your ideas and double-check that **everything** is supported by the article

How to Write (Expository Paragraph)

- a) a paragraph can have any number of sentences in it
- b) every paragraph needs a topic sentence - what is it about?
- c) every sentence should be (1) making a claim, (2) explaining a claim, or (3) providing evidence of an explanation of a claim.
 - think of it like a tree or a path :
 - claim -> explanation of claim -> evidence of explanation
- d) every paragraph needs a concluding sentence - restatement of big ideas
 - do not just repeat yourself (“in this paragraph, I have looked at how...”)
- e) avoid “in conclusion” - it’s lazy!