

Collecting the Main Idea of Text (A Raw Data)

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Data Description

This raw data may be used to generate systematic book summaries or to sum up each chapter of a book. The purpose of disclosing raw data is to encourage authors to study literacy using a review approach, especially in scientific studies.

How to Write a Summary | 5 Steps & Real Examples¹

Summarizing means giving a concise overview of a text's main points in your own words. A summary is always much shorter than the original text.

Writing a summary does not involve critiquing or analyzing the source—you should simply provide a clear, objective, accurate account of the most important information and ideas, without copying any text from the original and without missing any of the key points.

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When to summarize

There are many situations in which you might have to summarize an article or other source:

- As a stand-alone assignment to show you've understood the material.
- To keep notes that will help you remember what you've read.
- To give an overview of other researchers' work in a [literature review](#).

¹ <https://www.scribbr.com/citing-sources/how-to-summarize/>

When you're writing an academic text like an essay, research paper, or dissertation, you'll engage with other researchers' work in a variety of ways. Sometimes you might use a brief quote to support your point; sometimes you might paraphrase a few sentences or paragraphs.

But it's often appropriate to summarize a whole article or chapter if it is especially relevant to your own research, or to provide an overview of a source before you analyze or critique it.

In any case, the goal of summarizing is to give your reader a clear understanding of the original source. Follow the 4 steps outline below to write a good summary.

Step 1: Read the text

You should read the article more than once to make sure you've thoroughly understood it. It's often effective to read in three stages:

1. **Scan** the article quickly to get a sense of its topic and overall shape.
2. **Read** the article carefully, highlighting important points and taking notes as you read.
3. **Skim** the article again to confirm you've understood the key points, and re-read any particularly important or difficult passages.

There are some easy tricks you can use to identify the key points as you read:

- Start by reading the **abstract**—this already contains the author's own summary of their work, and it tells you what to expect from the article.
- Pay attention to **headings and subheadings**—these should give you a good sense of what each part is about.
- Read the **introduction** and the **conclusion** together and compare them: what did the author set out to do, and what was the outcome?

Scribbr Citation Checker **New**

The AI-powered Citation Checker helps you avoid common mistakes such as:

- Missing commas and periods
- Incorrect usage of "et al."
- Ampersands (&) in narrative citations
- Missing reference entries

Problems Click to copy to clipboard

~~{Park, Mothersbaugh, & Feick, 1994}~~
 (Park et al., 1994)

Click to copy to clipboard

1 **Abbreviation "et al." required.**

For sources with three or more authors, you should only name the first author, followed by the abbreviation "et al." (meaning "and others").

Suggested change

Name the first author followed by "et al.," as in the example above.

[Read more](#)

Step 2: Break the text down into sections

To make the text more manageable and understand its sub-points, break it down into smaller parts.

If the text is a scientific paper that follows a standard empirical structure, it is probably already organized into clearly marked sections, usually including an introduction, methods, results, and discussion.

Other types of articles may not be explicitly divided into sections. But most articles and essays will be structured around a series of sub-points or themes.

Try writing a word or phrase in the margin next to each paragraph that describes the paragraph's content. Then you can see at a glance what each part of the article focuses on. If several paragraphs cover similar or related topics, you may group them together in sections.

Step 3: Identify the key points in each section

Now it's time go through each part and pick out its most important points. What does your reader need to know to understand the overall argument or conclusion of the article?

Keep in mind that a summary does not involve paraphrasing every single paragraph of the article. Your goal is to extract the essential points, leaving out anything that can be considered background information or supplementary detail.

In a scientific article, there are some easy questions you can ask to identify the key points in each part:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What <u>research question</u> or problem was addressed? • Are there any <u>hypotheses</u> formulated? |
| Methods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of research was done? • How was data collected and analyzed? |

Results

- What were the most important findings?
- Were the hypotheses supported?

Discussion/conclusion

- What is the overall answer to the research question?
 - How does the author explain these results?
 - What are the implications of the results?
 - Are there any important limitations?
 - Are there any key recommendations?
-

If the article takes a different form, you might have to think more carefully about what points are most important for the reader to understand its argument.

In this case, pay particular attention to the thesis statement—the central claim that the author wants us to accept, which usually appears in the introduction—and the topic sentences that signal the main idea of each paragraph.

Summary Writing Format²

- When writing a summary, remember that it should be in the form of a paragraph.
- A summary begins with an introductory sentence that states the text’s title, author and main point of the text as you see it.
- A summary is written in your own words.
- A summary contains only the ideas of the original text. Do not insert any of your own opinions, interpretations, deductions or comments into a summary.
- Identify in order the significant sub-claims the author uses to defend the main point.
- Copy word-for-word three separate passages from the essay that you think support and/or defend the main point of the essay as you see it.
- Cite each passage by first signaling the work and the author, put “quotation marks” around the passage you chose, and put the number of the paragraph where the passages can be found immediately after the passage.
- Using source material from the essay is important. Why? Because defending claims with source material is what you will be asked to do when writing papers for your college professors.
- Write a last sentence that “wraps” up your summary; often a simple rephrasing of the main point.

Example Summary Writing Format

In the essay *Santa Ana*, author Joan Didion’s main point is (*state main point*). According to Didion “...*passage 1...*” (para.3). Didion also writes “...*passage 2...*” (para.8). Finally, she states “...*passage 3...*” (para. 12) Write a last sentence that “wraps” up your summary; often a simple rephrasing of the main point.

Writing for Success: Narration

² <https://www.kellogg.edu/upload/eng151/chapter/how-to-write-a-summary/index.html>

This section will help you determine the purpose and structure of narration in writing.

The Purpose of Narrative Writing

Narration means the art of storytelling, and the purpose of narrative writing is to tell stories. Any time you tell a story to a friend or family member about an event or incident in your day, you engage in a form of narration. In addition, a narrative can be factual or fictional. A factual story is one that is based on, and tries to be faithful to, actual events as they unfolded in real life. A fictional story is a made-up, or imagined, story; the writer of a fictional story can create characters and events as he or she sees fit.

The big distinction between factual and fictional narratives is based on a writer's purpose. The writers of factual stories try to recount events as they actually happened, but writers of fictional stories can depart from real people and events because the writers' intents are not to retell a real-life event. Biographies and memoirs are examples of factual stories, whereas novels and short stories are examples of fictional stories.

Know Your Purpose

Because the line between fact and fiction can often blur, it is helpful to understand what your purpose is from the beginning. Is it important that you recount history, either your own or someone else's? Or does your interest lie in reshaping the world in your own image—either how you would like to see it or how you imagine it could be? Your answers will go a long way in shaping the stories you tell.

Ultimately, whether the story is fact or fiction, narrative writing tries to relay a series of events in an emotionally engaging way. You want your audience to be moved by your story, which could mean through laughter, sympathy, fear, anger, and so on. The more clearly you tell your story, the more emotionally engaged your audience is likely to be.

The Structure of a Narrative Essay

Major narrative events are most often conveyed in chronological order, the order in which events unfold from first to last. Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and these events are typically organized by time. Certain [transitional words and phrases](#) aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed here:

Chronological Transitional Words

after/afterward	as soon as	at last	before
currently	during	eventually	meanwhile
next	now	since	soon
finally	later	still	then
until	when/whenever	while	first, second, third

Other basic components of a narrative are:

- Plot – The events as they unfold in sequence.
- Characters – The people who inhabit the story and move it forward. Typically, there are minor characters and main characters. The minor characters generally play supporting roles to the main character, also known as the protagonist.
- Conflict – The primary problem or obstacle that unfolds in the plot that the protagonist must solve or overcome by the end of the narrative. The way in which the protagonist resolves the conflict of the plot results in the theme of the narrative.
- Theme – The ultimate message the narrative is trying to express; it can be either explicit or implicit.

Writing a Narrative Essay

When writing a narrative essay, start by asking yourself if you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then freewrite, brainstorm, or mindmap about topics that are of general interest to you. For more information about pre-writing, review the materials in “My Writing Process – Prewriting and Draft.”

Once you have a general idea of what you will be writing about, you should sketch out the major events of the story that will compose your plot. Typically, these events will be revealed chronologically and climax at a central conflict that must be resolved by the end of the story. The use of strong details is crucial as you describe the events and characters in your narrative. You want the reader to emotionally engage with the world that you create in writing.

Keep the Senses in Mind

To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative.

As always, it is important to start with a strong introduction to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an event that is interesting to introduce the story and get it going. Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the central conflict of the story and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme of the piece.

Narratives Tell A Story

Every day, you relate stories to other people through simple exchanges. You may have had a horrible experience at a restaurant the night before, or you may have had some good news you are ready to share. In each one of these experiences there’s a story, and when you begin to share a personal experience, you often communicate in a narrative mode.

Although narratives can vary widely, most share several common features. Generally, storytellers establish:

- *Characters*, the person/people (sometimes they are animals) the story is about, which may include the storyteller
- *Conflict*, or struggle in the story, that builds their audience’s interest

- *Details*, or descriptions, that appeal to the *senses* of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste
- *A sequence of events* in a *plot*, or order of what happens in the story, that keeps the audience engaged as the story unfolds
- Reflection of events around a *theme*, or unifying idea, for telling the story

Narrative Essay Example

Read the following example of a narrative essay. Note how it reflects the basic components and common features of narratives, as discussed above.

My College Education

By Scott McLean, in *Writing for Success*

The first class I went to in college was philosophy, and it changed my life forever. Our first assignment was to write a short response paper to the Albert Camus essay “The Myth of Sisyphus.” I was extremely nervous about the assignment as well as college. However, through all the confusion in philosophy class, many of my questions about life were answered.

I entered college intending to earn a degree in engineering. I always liked the way mathematics had right and wrong answers. I understood the logic and was very good at it. So when I received my first philosophy assignment that asked me to write my interpretation of the Camus essay, I was instantly confused. What is the right way to do this assignment, I wondered? I was nervous about writing an incorrect interpretation and did not want to get my first assignment wrong. Even more troubling was that the professor refused to give us any guidelines on what he was looking for; he gave us total freedom. He simply said, “I want to see what you come up with.”

Full of anxiety, I first set out to read Camus’s essay several times to make sure I really knew what it was about. I did my best to take careful notes. Yet even after I took all these notes and knew the essay inside and out, I still did not know the right answer. What was my interpretation? I could think of a million different ways to interpret the essay, but which one was my professor looking for? In math class, I was used to examples and explanations of solutions. This assignment gave me nothing; I was completely on my own to come up with my individual interpretation.

Next, when I sat down to write, the words just did not come to me. My notes and ideas were all present, but the words were lost. I decided to try every prewriting strategy I could find. I brainstormed, made idea maps, and even wrote an outline. Eventually, after a lot of stress, my ideas became more organized and the words fell on the page. I had my interpretation of “The Myth of Sisyphus,” and I had my main reasons for interpreting the essay. I remember being unsure of myself, wondering if what I was saying made sense, or if I was even on the right track. Through all the uncertainty, I continued writing the best I could. I finished the conclusion paragraph, had my spouse proofread it for errors, and turned it in the next day simply hoping for the best.

Then, a week or two later, came judgment day. The professor gave our papers back to us with grades and comments. I remember feeling simultaneously afraid and eager to get the paper back in my hands. It turned out, however, that I had nothing to worry about. The professor gave me an A on the paper, and his notes suggested that I wrote an effective essay overall. He wrote that my reading of the essay was very original and that my thoughts were well

organized. My relief and newfound confidence upon reading his comments could not be overstated.

What I learned through this process extended well beyond how to write a college paper. I learned to be open to new challenges. I never expected to enjoy a philosophy class and always expected to be a math and science person. This class and assignment, however, gave me the selfconfidence, critical-thinking skills, and courage to try a new career path. I left engineering and went on to study law and eventually became a lawyer. More important, that class and paper helped me understand education differently. Instead of seeing college as a direct stepping stone to a career, I learned to see college as a place to first learn and then seek a career or enhance an existing career. By giving me the space to express my own interpretation and to argue for my own values, my philosophy class taught me the importance of education for education's sake. That realization continues to pay dividends every day.

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Key Takeaways

- Narration is the art of storytelling.
- Narratives can be either factual or fictional. In either case, narratives should emotionally engage the reader.
- Most narratives are composed of major events sequenced in chronological order.
- Time transition words and phrases are used to orient the reader in the sequence of a narrative.
- The four basic components to all narratives are plot, character, conflict, and theme.
- The use of sensory details is crucial to emotionally engaging the reader.
- A strong introduction is important to hook the reader. A strong conclusion should add resolution to the conflict and evoke the narrative's theme.

Student Sample: Narrative Essay

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Introduction to Illustration/Example Essay

Illustration/Example

To illustrate means to show or demonstrate something clearly. An effective illustration essay clearly demonstrates and supports a point through the use of examples and/or evidence. Ultimately, you want the evidence to help the reader “see” your point, as one would see a good illustration in a magazine or on a website. The stronger your evidence is, the more clearly the reader will consider your point.

In this module, you will develop your skills in illustration/example writing.

Module Outcomes

After successfully completing this module, you should be able to:

1. Determine the purpose and structure of the illustration essay.

2. Understand how to write an illustration essay.

“She’s Your Basic L.O.L. in N.A.D” by Perri Klass

In “She’s Your Basic L.O.L. in N.A.D,” pediatrician and writer Perri Klass discusses the medical-speak she encountered in her training as a doctor and its underlying meaning.

Click on the link to view the essay: [“She’s Your Basic L.O.L. in N.A.D” by Perri Klass](#)

As you read, look for the following:

- The author’s primary thesis or theme
- The examples provided by each author to assert the theme
- See if you can determine which essay uses “multiple” examples (a series of brief examples to illustrate or assert the thesis) and which essay uses “extended” examples (longer examples explained through multiple sentences or paragraphs)

“April & Paris” by David Sedaris

In “April & Paris,” writer David Sedaris explores the unique impact of animals on the human psyche.

Click on the link to view the essay: [“April & Paris” by David Sedaris](#)

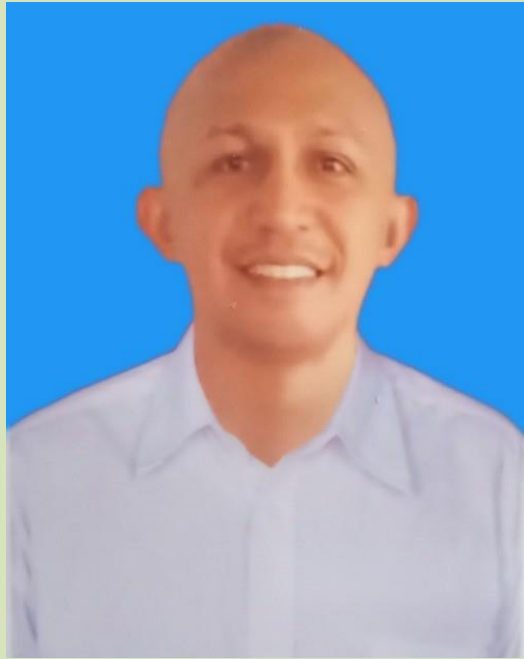
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How to Write a Summary³

- I. Read the material and identify the main ideas. Distinguish the main ideas from the details.**
- II. Write the main ideas in phrase form. The main ideas can be noted in a list, in a topic web, or in the left column of two-column notes.**
- III. Begin the summary with an introductory statement.**
- IV. Turn the main ideas into sentences, occasionally including details when it is necessary to convey the main idea.**
- V. Combine the sentences into one or more paragraphs.**
- VI. Use transition words to connect the sentences and the paragraphs.**
- VII. Proofread the summary for punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and content.**

³ <https://keystoliteracy.com/wp-content/pdfs/5b-wkshp-templates/how-to-write-a-summary.pdf>



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