**Précis-writing**

A précis is a summary. Précis writing is an exercise in compression. A précis is the gist of a passage expressed in as few words as possible. A précis should give all essential points so that anyone reading it will be able to understand the idea expressed in the original passage.

Note that précis writing is different from paraphrasing. In a paraphrase you should give all the details: you should not leave out any details. A paraphrase will be at least as long as and sometimes longer than the original. A précis, on the other hand, must always be shorter than the original. It should express only the main theme that too as briefly as possible.

**How long should a précis be?**

There are no rigid rules regarding the length of a précis. But as a general rule, it should not contain more than a third of the total number of words in the original passage.

**Uses of précis writing**

Most people read carelessly and fail to fully comprehend the meaning of the passage. Précis writing forces them to pay attention to what they read because no one can write a summary of a passage unless they read it carefully. So summarizing teaches one to read with concentration.

Précis writing also improves your overall writing skills. It teaches you how to express your thoughts clearly, concisely and effectively. You learn to choose your words carefully and construct your sentences in a logical and concise manner.

###### Do's and Don’ts of Précis Writing=g

* **Do's in a précis:**
  + Start your précis by highlighting the main idea of the passage and you should create contextual environment where you can place the necessary points.
  + Once the main idea is established in the précis, you can present the methods, points, facts etc. used by the author of the passage.
  + Compress and clarify a lengthy passage, article, or book, while retaining important concepts, key words, and important data.
  + Remove what is superfluous and retain the core essence of the work.
  + Always remember that mentions about history should be advisably done in the past tense.
  + State the purpose of the research or piece of writing (why was it important to conduct this research or write on this topic?)
* **Don'ts in a précis:**
  + Do not express your own opinion, wish, remark or criticism.
  + Do not insert any question in your précis. Its significance, if essential, may be expressed by a statement.
  + Do not use abbreviations or contractions.
  + Do not be shaky. This suggests that most probably, you have not understood the sense of the passage properly.