

Paraphrase,  
Summary, and  
Precis – how to  
write them

Paraphrasing, summarizing, and precis'ing are three different types of writing. All three are important skills for your student to learn.

When you paraphrase, you retell the story in your own words in a passage that is about the same length as the original.

When you summarize, you significantly shorten a piece, retell it in your own words, touching on the main points of the passage.

When you write a précis, you use one or two concise sentences to give the essence of a passage.

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# How to Write a Paraphrase

## Procedure

When you paraphrase, you state—in your own words—the argument or point of a passage, line by line.

### Step 1

Parse and/or diagram to identify the subject and verb in the sentence.

Substitute synonyms for those terms.

### Step 2

Identify adverbs and adjectives, and replace them with synonyms.

### Step 3

Start some your sentences differently.

### Step 4

Where the author uses a figure of speech, a cliché, or a phrase, replace with single words when possible. In other cases replace single words with phrases.

### Step 5

Read the original sentence; read your paraphrase to see if they both convey the same basic message.

Correct as needed.

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## Step 6

When you have finished your paraphrase, read your version, read the original again. Compare and correct. You need to capture the sense of the whole passage at the same time that you follow the sense of each line.

## **How to Write a Summary**

A summary restates the author's main ideas. It omits all examples and evidence used to support and illustrate the point of the passage. The function of a summary is to represent a large amount of material in a concise form.

## **How to Write a Précis**

A précis is a concise summary. It should contain only the essential points, statements, or facts with the focus on reproducing the logic, organization, and emphasis of the original text.

# Précis Writing Procedure

## Step 1

Read the passage through many times. The first task of the précis writer is to understand the complete work well enough to abstract the central idea of the poem. Underline important terms.

## Step 2

Write an initial summary of the passage in which you write the ideas and concepts in sequence as presented by the author in the original. In this initial summary, you are paring down the original text and may retain the author's words and phrases.

## Step 3

Carefully consider the author's argument/main idea. Did your abstract capture that idea in logical form? Reduce your initial abstract further by omitting anything which is not absolutely necessary to the essential idea of the passage.



## Step 4

Replace words and phrases specifically used by the author with suitable synonyms.

## Step 5

Read and reread your précis to ensure that you have the bare minimum of words necessary to express the idea of the passage.

Check to make sure the words and phrases used are your own and not those of the author.