

Summarizing an Essay  
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A summary briefly presents in your own words the main point and supporting ideas of a piece of writing. The summary of an essay should consist of one well-developed paragraph. Include:

- The full name of the author
- The title of the work, in quotation marks
- The kind of writing it is (essay)
- The main point or thesis
- Two or three supporting ideas or key steps the writer goes through to develop the thesis

Please note:

- You may include a quotation of a phrase or sentence, but most of the paragraph should be in your own words!
- Do not include your opinion or response to the essay!

A thesis is not just a topic. It is a statement about a topic.

To grasp a writer's thesis, the "What" at the core of an essay, notice the

- Who: who is the author, according to the author's self-description in the essay?
- When: what specific era is he or she writing in or about? Or at least mention date of publication
- Where: is the author focusing on a specific neighborhood, place, city, or nation?
- How: does the author support his or her ideas mainly with a description of personal experience? An analysis of experiments? A review of two or three important thinkers? A comparison of several approaches?
- How: is the author's tone humorous, frustrated, angry, inspirational, relieved, or matter-of-fact?

Good writing is bold, shedding light on human experience. In writing a summary, you need to be bold enough to grasp the writer's thesis, present it clearly in your own words, and show what ideas the author uses to support it.