**GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A SUMMARY**

**What is a summary?**

A summary is a condensed version of a text – the main idea (or thesis) and its essential supporting points. Similar to paraphrasing, summarizing involves using your own words and writing style to express another author’s ideas. Unlike an analysis, a summary does not require you to critique or respond to the ideas in a text. Do not include your own ideas, opinions, or criticisms when writing a summary.

**When do I summarize?**

Summarize a passage whenever you want to give your readers a brief overview of a text.

**How do I summarize?**

* Read the original carefully. You may find that you must read the piece two, three, or even four times in order to understand it completely and accurately. Try highlighting the main ideas or taking notes as you read. Look up any words or phrases you do not understand from the context. The goal here is to have a clear and accurate understanding of the reading as a whole.
* Now write one sentence that states the main idea or thesis of the entire text. Typically, you can look carefully at the first and last paragraphs of the original to find the thesis.
* Next, break the original down into related paragraphs or sections. Sometimes the original will already have subheadings you can use.
* Then write a one or two sentence summary for each group of related paragraphs. These sentences should reflect the main idea of each section clearly and accurately.
* Create an outline using the sentences you just wrote. First, write down the thesis. Then, list the main idea sentences for each section you identified, keeping them in the original order.
* You’re now ready to begin writing your summary. Be sure to be reader friendly. Start with a summary introduction, which includes the name of the text and its author, followed by your statement of the overall thesis of the original.
* After the summary introduction is the body of your summary. Start with the sentences you wrote for each group of related paragraphs. Build upon these sentences to create the summary’s body. Focus on the major points of the original.

**Is my summary effective?**

When summarizing, follow the guidelines listed below:

* Include only the main points of the original text
* Write objectively; summaries should not report your opinion on the matter, but rather accurately reflect the author’s ideas
* Use your own words; quotes should only be used when communicating specific phrases used in the original text
* Do not worry about following the original order of ideas, as the author may not present his/her ideas in a straightforward manner
* Use transitions, such as “moreover,” “in addition,” and “next,” to create a smooth summary that shows connections between the ideas of the original
* Keep the length down to about a quarter of the original text
* Your summary should give the reader a clear and concise understanding of the original text. If the reader needs to look at the original text in order to understand your summary, try again.

Useful questions to ask when summarizing a:

***Narrative or Story***

* Who are the main characters? What are their characteristics?
* When and where did the story take place? What were the circumstances?
* What prompted the action in the story?
* How do the main characters express their feelings?
* What did the main characters decide to do?
* Did they set a goal, if so, what?
* How did the main characters try to accomplish their goals?
* How does the story turn out?

***Argumentative Essay***

* What information is presented that leads to a claim?
* What is the basic statement or claim that is the focus of the information?
* What examples or explanations are presented to support this claim?
* What concessions are made about the claim?