

Critical reading for summaries:

Critical reading is important for writing an accurate summary. If you can't remember what you read, then have you really read it?

1. Identify the main points in the first paragraph. Underline or make margin notes (or both). The main point of this paragraph is often the main point of the entire work.
2. Identify the main idea of each subsequent paragraph and mark the text.
3. The final paragraph often contains the conclusion or confirmation of the author's thesis. Compare the main idea of the first paragraph with the main idea in the final paragraph. Did you notice any changes in the author's ideas?

How to prepare for summary writing:

Here are some steps you can take, and questions you should ask, before writing your summary.

1. Reread the entire work carefully, underlining and jotting notes to yourself if you haven't already.
2. Read over your notes or margin annotations.
3. Determine the author's thesis or main idea. Also consider the title, and whether or not it helps you understand anything significant about the work.
4. Find the author's main supporting points. Subheads, sentences, and the first and last paragraphs of the original may help you locate key points.
5. Determine the structure of the writing.
6. Who, or what, are the main characters?
7. What is the tone of the writing? Is it humorous, angry, scientific?
8. What is the author's conclusion?

Guidelines for writing a summary:

Now, using the notes you have made, you are ready to write your summary.

1. Write your topic sentence, stating the author's thesis. Also include the author's name and title.
2. In your own words, jot down the author's most important supporting points, following his or her order. You may want to include significant examples and evidence, as well as structure and style, but remember: give main points only! A summary should be significantly shorter than the original.
3. End with the author's conclusion.
4. Next, revise your work, asking yourself, "Will my summary convey the author's main idea and key supporting points to someone who has not read the original?"
5. Proofread and finalize the summary. Make sure that you accurately reflect the author's ideas using *your own words*. If you quote from the passage, use quotation marks, and do not include your own interpretation or opinion.