

Summaries vs. Critiques



Summaries

What is a summary?

A summary provides an unbiased overview of an article or text. It conveys the text's main idea and is significantly shorter than the original work. A summary should inform readers of a text's overall theme without repeating every detail.



Why summarize?

Summarizing conveys your competency of the basic ideas addressed in a text. You can prove that you've picked up on important themes in what you've read by condensing those themes into a coherent overview.

Stick to the facts!

Objectivity is essential when summarizing. A summary should not include your opinions about the subject matter or the author's argumentative strategy. Even if you disagree with the text's content, you must relay only its factual elements.

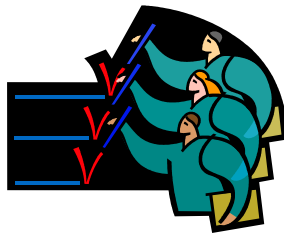
DOs and DON'Ts for writing summaries:

Do point out the author's purpose for writing (Ex: to inform, to persuade).

Do pay attention to how the text is organized. Set up your summary using a similar structure.

Do take note of the main idea in a text. The introduction and conclusion are the best places to look for the main idea.

Do keep your reader in mind. Your summary should provide readers with a clear understanding of the original text, even if they've never read it.



Don't offer an opinion on what you are summarizing.

Don't use direct quotes. Express the author's ideas in your own words.

Don't include too many minor details in your summary. Focus on the "big ideas" within the text.

The least you need to know...

Summaries focus only on ideas contained within a text.



Questions to ask when summarizing:

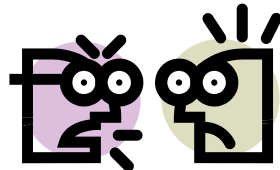
- How would I briefly explain to someone else what this text is about?
- What is the main idea the author is trying to convey?
- How has the author organized the text?
- Does my summary maintain the author's original intention?



Critiques

What is a critique?

A critique offers your opinion about the ideas presented in a text. You'll make a judgment about an author's ideas and comment on the effectiveness of an author's argument.



Why critique?

Critiquing lets you provide your own unique insight on a text. You will not only prove that you understand the arguments within a text, but you will also show that you can develop and support your own arguments in response to the text.

What do you think?

Subjectivity is the primary goal when writing a critique. A critique should be based around your well-supported opinions. If you think an author's argument is poorly constructed, writing a critique is your chance to prove why you think that way.

DOs and DON'Ts for writing critiques:

Do determine the author's purpose for writing.

Do examine how the arguments within a text are supported.

Do pay attention to how the text is organized and why it might be set up that way.

Do include direct quotes from the text to support your argument. Make sure you explain their relevance to your opinion about the text.



Don't confuse a critique with a **review**. You are not writing about whether or not you *liked* the text. Instead, you're presenting why you agree or disagree with the author's ideas.

Don't include too much summary in your critique. However, you may begin your critique with a brief summary of the text in order to introduce readers.

The least you need to know...

Critiques present your own reactions to ideas within a text.



Questions to ask when critiquing:

- What is the author's purpose for writing about this particular topic?
- How does the author support his or her main idea?
- Is the author effective in conveying his or her ideas?
How could the author's argument.

