

Key Points from Alyssa's Writing Summaries Lecture

Elements of a Good Summary

1. Good summaries only include the main idea of the original text. They leave out the details.
2. Good summaries are neutral and unbiased.
3. Good summaries only information that is relevant to what you (the writer) want to discuss.
4. Good summaries are in your own words rather than the words of the original text.

Skills Involved

- Being able to distinguish between the main ideas and the supporting details.
- Basic reading comprehension and the ability to remain fair-minded.
- Being able to see the relationship between the main ideas and the focus of your own argument.
- Reversing the sentence structure, using synonyms, indicating any direct quotes with quotation marks.

The Basic Part of a Summary

- Introduction – Introduces the text to be summarized (title + author), gives any pertinent background information or the rhetorical context.
- Gives the topic and main thesis of the text. (This is different from your thesis.)
- Lists the main points that are discussed in the text.
- May possibly include one illustration from the text (e.g. detail, example, etc.).

Summaries are basically 1/10th the size of the original.

Summaries use the sandwich principle too (see the Lecture Notes on Quoting Mechanics for a review of this principle).