

Effective summarising



This handout is about *Summarising*.
There is another handout that
focusses on *Effective Paraphrasing*.

Why Summarise? (The Purpose)

Summarising is a critical university skill that demonstrates you have interpreted and reshaped information. It is used to:

- Engage with major ideas in your discipline.
- Support your own arguments with evidence.
- Condense information so it is always shorter than the original.

When to Summarise

You will use this skill across various academic tasks:

- Study Phase: Making notes from readings or capturing spoken ideas in lectures.
- Writing Phase: Creating abstracts, synopses, annotated bibliographies, or critical reviews.
- Assessment Phase: Exam preparation and speaking in seminars or tutorials.

The Two Golden Rules to Avoid Plagiarism

To maintain academic integrity and avoid misinterpretation, follow these two requirements:

1. Acknowledge the Author: Always credit the original creator of the ideas through proper in-text citations and references.
2. Transform the Text: You must significantly change both the wording and the sentence structure. Simply cutting out a few words, is not enough and still counts as plagiarism.



Related resources:

[Effective Paraphrasing](#)

[Referencing the APA Style \(7th edition\)](#)

[Referencing FAQs](#)

How to Summarise

Phase 1: Preparation

Define Your Goal: Identify the purpose of the summary (e.g., personal notes, critical review, or evidence for an essay).

Deep Reading: Read the original text carefully. Look up unfamiliar words and re-read until you have full comprehension.

Phase 2: Analysis & Selection

Extract Key Ideas: Highlight the main ideas and important definitions.

- *Note: Keep discipline-specific terms that cannot be replaced.*

Identify the Thesis: Pinpoint the author's main claim (the "Thesis"). If it isn't stated directly, write it out in your own words.

Observe Tone: Identify the author's attitude (Is it critical, praising, or uncertain?).

Condense Details: Group minor ideas and examples into categories using a single word or phrase.

Phase 3: Drafting

Draft Blind: Write your summary without looking at the original text to ensure you are using your own words.

Filter Repetition: Ensure you do not include repeated information from the original source.

Phase 4: Refining & Referencing

Accuracy Check: Compare your draft to the original. Ensure the meaning and attitude remain unaltered.

Apply Quotes: Use “ ” for any unique or specialist phrases you kept from the original.

Cite Your Source: Record accurate bibliographical details for your references and footnotes.