

Writing a summary

1. First, read the text to get an idea of what it is about and the writer's attitude to the topic.
2. Read it through again one section at a time and identify the key sentences. Check the first sentence of each paragraph. This sentence (topic sentence) usually introduces the main idea for the paragraph with the following sentences supporting the main idea. Look also at the last sentence in the paragraph, as this often summarizes what has been written.
3. Look only for the key facts or findings in the text that support the writer's main ideas. Decide which are the most important or relevant and underline or highlight them. Leave out detail or examples.
4. Write the main point in each paragraph (or section) in one sentence. Use your own words!
5. Organize all the information in the most logical way. Follow the order of the original article. Finally, delete any repeated ideas or details.

Important points to remember

- Do not add any of your own ideas or opinions.
- Useful words and phrases are "therefore", "yet", "however", "the author claims/states/suggests ..."
- If you have to quote directly from the original text, use quotation marks " ".
- Check your grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- A summary is likely to be about one-third (1/3) of the length of the original text.

Summarizing Practice: The Successful Language Learner

One of the most important characteristics of successful language learners is their willingness to make mistakes. Young children learn their first language by trying to communicate a message rather than by trying to learn grammar rules. Children are not worried about correctness. They are concerned with the message, and the message is more important than the grammar. In the same way, second language learners must try to communicate even when they are not certain of the correct forms or words. By using the language to communicate, their language skills will improve. For example, if someone else cannot understand what the learner is trying to say, then the learner must change the way he or she is using the language. In this way, the learner quickly learns what is correct and what is incorrect. Mistakes become learning opportunities. Therefore, the more language learners use the language, the more skilled they become in the language. Successful language learners do not wait until they can speak or write perfectly before they use the language; they use the language in order to improve their speaking and writing.

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Questions:

- 1) What is the topic sentence?
- 2) What is the main idea?
- 3) What reasons are given? NOTE: In your summary, you don't list these reasons and examples, but it is important for you to understand how the main idea is supported.
- 4) Write one sentence to summarize the main ideas of this paragraph.