



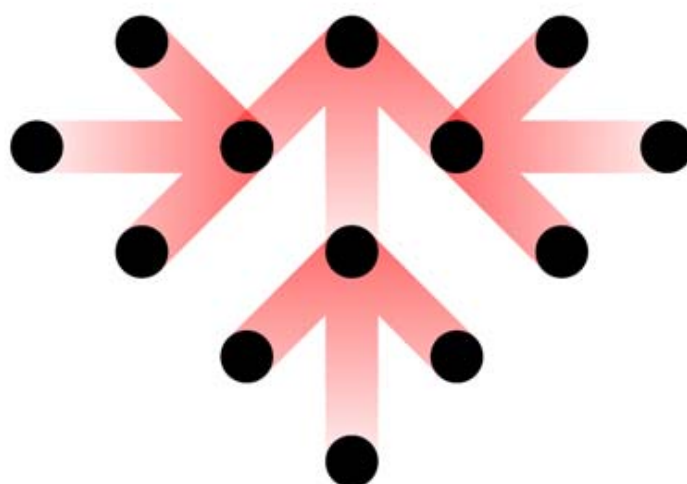
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Synthesize text



Handbook for Students



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"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" asked Alice.

"That depends on where you want to go to" said the Cheshire Cat.

"I don't much care where" said Alice.

"Then, it doesn't matter which way you go" said the Cat.

"So long as I get SOMEWHERE" Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that" said the Cat,

"... if you only walk long enough."

(Lewis Carroll - Alice in the Wonderland)



1 INTRODUCING SYNTHESIS TEXT

I think it has also happened to you to have your teacher coming in the classroom one day in a good mood and telling you: "hello guys and girls, here is the book you have to read for the weekend ..."

And he or she takes out a huge volume, at least 400 pages written in small characters from his rucksack. ...

Task: make a summary for next Monday!

Well, it is not necessary to have 400 pages to summarise to realise you may be in trouble. Sometimes a couple of pages might even pose a big problem.

Making good summaries or synthesis of novels, essays or even movies is not an easy job for anyone, not just students.

'Synthesize Text' teaches methods and techniques useful to select, restructure and assemble texts in your own words from one or more sources, either when you have to write some essays or give oral presentations.

Each learning step is organized into five sections:

Discover: explanations of the key skills

Learn: examples of how to summarise and synthesise

Practice: tasks and exercises to help you try out what you have learned

Assess your learning: tools to help you assess your performance and measure your progress

Learning resources: list of useful links to online learning resources

You can either work through 'Synthesise Text' chronologically or study the modules that most interest you, in any order you want.



2 GETTING STARTED - About SUMMARIES AND SYNTHESSES

2.1 Summary and Synthesis - What is the difference?

The terms **summary** and **synthesis** are considered in common language to be synonyms.

Actually, there are important differences between a summary and a synthesis.

The differences are:

1. the number of texts (sources) taken into consideration.
2. the way these texts (sources) are then interpreted.

A summary is an objective, short written presentation in your own words of ideas, facts, events, **in a SINGLE PIECE OF TEXT**.

Example: A summary of a text describing the African Lion

A synthesis is a "combination" of **SEVERAL TEXTS into a single one**, which aims to create an understanding or original perspective of the information in those texts.

Be aware that there are many types of synthesis, shown in examples below.

Review Synthesis = a presentation of ideas in texts treating the same subjects.

Example: An essay about African Big Cats

Explanatory Synthesis = a particular theme in several texts in the same area.

Example: An essay about behaviours of African Big Cats

Argumentative Synthesis = a selection of ideas in several texts, with aim to argument a certain point of view or your own point of view.

Example: Preservation of Big Cats in Africa – a duty of humanity

Illustration synthesis = ideas supporting your point of view, from several texts.

Example: Personalities pledging for Big Cats' preservation in Africa

Concession synthesis = differing views that make your point of view stronger

Example: Big Cats hunting – a solution for species preservation?

Comparison synthesis = different views on a subject, presented with the aim to highlight the most important aspects related to that subject.

Example: Big cats preservation – Mistakes and accomplishments



2.2 Summarising - What, Why, How to?

What is Summarising?

Summarising or summarisation means to develop a summary of a text or other resources. It is a text, a video or an article in an abridged form that:

- communicates **what is most important** for the author of that content,
- is written "**in your own words**", and
- states the information "**someone need to focus on**" when studying that content.

The result of summarisation must be a description of the most important features contained in the original source, in particular: the central theme, the main points and the key ideas.

Summarising – Why is it important?

Summarising **allows comprehension** and a concise **understanding of the material**. At school, summarising helps you to understand the organisational structure of a lesson and integrate the learning of the major points. It enables you to focus on the elements of an assigned text which are **worth knowing and remembering**.

Summarisation is **one of the hardest strategies for students to grasp**.

Learning to summarise requires time, models and numerous opportunities to practice.

In today's work culture it is important to be proficient in the skill of summarisation, it can save time, money and energy. Summarised versions of information are used in almost all professional settings.

Summarising – How to do it?

A large number of summarisation techniques have been developed over time by education professionals. The three main elements common to all the techniques are:

1. the **selection**: discover and retain main ideas from original resource.
2. the **rejection**: remove unnecessary information in the text/resource.
3. the **substitution**: restate sentences in the original text.

The summarisation process can be delivered by graphical or visual tools or by text analysis and condensation software applications.



2.3 Synthesising texts - What and Why?

What is a SYNTHESIS?

In educational fields, a **synthesis** is known as a **WRITTEN TEXT** presenting or discussing information from several texts or from other types of resources.

A synthesis could aim **to explain ideas** from several (written) resources, or draw together particular themes or traits.

Syntheses are often meant to complete a specific organisation of the material from different texts, according to certain themes or traits.

The organisation of ideas can be produced in various formats, **tables and graphs** are considered valuable syntheses of information.

In all these cases above, we spoke about **review** or **explanatory syntheses**.

Review and explanatory syntheses are also called "**background syntheses**".

Sometimes, in your assignments, you may be asked to synthesise concepts from several texts and then to express (with steady, logical arguments) your opinion about them. In this case, you have to draw an **argument synthesis**.

Argument or argumentative syntheses can be in one of the following categories:

1. **Illustration Synthesis**, which is a summary of texts (or other resources: audio or video clips, documentary film) that support a specific point of view.
2. **Concession Synthesis**, which is a written work meant to acknowledge validity of the counter-argument, while showing that your argument is stronger.
3. **Comparison-contrast Synthesis**, which is meant to compare similarities and to highlight differences between the two subjects, the aim is to highlight the most important aspects of both.

All syntheses must meet the following requirements in reference to **the sources** (texts or other type of sources) you used in developing it:

1. It should accurately report information from the sources you have used.
2. It should be organised in such a way that readers can immediately see where the information from the sources overlap.
3. It should explain information contained in original sources and help the reader understand them in greater depth.
4. It should help readers to see in a new way the information from the sources.



Synthesising– What is it?

At its basic level, a synthesis involves **combining two or more summaries**.

However, synthesis writing is more difficult than it might appear: the combining of summaries must be done in a meaningful way. More than that, in the case of argumentative syntheses, your written work must be "thesis-driven": it should stand for an issue and then defend that stance.

Background synthesis involves bringing together ideas and information on a topic and organising them by topic rather than by sources. Its role is to present the information available in a helpful and logical way.

Argument syntheses involves the use of an "argumentative presentation" as any opinion must be driven with arguments. The way you express an opinion or a particular point of view and support it by using convincing arguments is the most important aspect of this type of synthesising work.

Synthesising – Why is it important?

In **school and the professional world**, synthesis writing is also an important skill.

In many sciences and literature classes, you may be asked to write a synthesis of several (text) sources. Your synthesis primary purpose must be to show readers that:

1. **you are familiar** with the subject you are dealing with, and
2. **you are qualified** to offer your own opinions on issues in the subject.

But, more importantly, you should show your ability to address a problem appropriately.

In any profession, synthesis-writing skills of accuracy and brevity are important.

Companies often ask to employees to draft work reports, business reports, proposals, case management, and other professional writings. You may be called upon to synthesis several professional writings or even raw data of a subject.

In other professional domains, you may be asked to summarise events, activities, people's resumes, or workplace problems.

At first glance, summary and synthesis writing is a simple skill. However, because a person must understand the author's ideas in depth, and then fairly express or develop them, writing a good summary or synthesis can be a difficult academic undertaking.



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2.4 Assess your summary and synthesis skills

The skills necessary to develop summaries or synthesis are considered as:

- **functional**, they can be acquired and then refined by experience and practice.
- **transferable**, they can be applied to a variety of professional occupations.

You can assess your ability to create a summary and synthesis by performing the evaluation test below. This self-assessment test comprises of three steps:

1. assessing your skills required to complete a summary or synthesis.
2. confirming the skills you most enjoyed using.
3. establishing the skills you want to learn/improve.

Step 1. Assess your level of proficiency for each skill below by circling the appropriate number in the right hand column. Assign a rating from five (above average) to one (below average).

1.	Read with understanding skills - You are able to					
a.	Determine the purpose of a reading activity	5	4	3	2	1
b.	Monitor your comprehension in reading	5	4	3	2	1
c.	Analyse the read information	5	4	3	2	1
d.	Integrate new information with your prior knowledge	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Investigative skills - You are able to					
a.	Reflect on underlying meaning of read information	5	4	3	2	1
b.	Sort read information into categories and classify it	5	4	3	2	1
c.	Compare information and find patterns	5	4	3	2	1
d.	Locate the sources of information you need in your work	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Planning and organisational skills - You are able to					
a.	Identify your objectives and tasks to be accomplished	5	4	3	2	1
b.	Organise sources of information to meet your goals	5	4	3	2	1
c.	Prioritise steps in your work	5	4	3	2	1
d.	Revise and enhance the effectiveness of your work	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Writing skills - You are able to					
a.	Edit and prepare written materials	5	4	3	2	1
b.	Organise your written information to serve your purpose	5	4	3	2	1
c.	Use language, grammar and punctuation correctly	5	4	3	2	1
d.	Write creatively	5	4	3	2	1
	TOTAL on COLUMN					
	GRAND TOTAL					

A total of less than 24 points means you need to improve your synthesis skills.



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Step 2. Underline in the table below up to 10 skills you enjoy in your everyday activities, work or life. In the right most column, give an example that best shows your use of the selected skill.

Read with understanding skills	
Determine the purpose of your reading activity	<i>I read every week an article about climate changes because I want to understand their impact on my everyday life</i>
Monitor your comprehension in reading	
Analyse the read information	
Integrate new information with your prior knowledge	
Investigative skills	
Reflect on the underlying meaning of read information	
Sort read information into categories and classify it	
Compare information and find patterns	
Locate your necessary sources of information	
Planning and organisational skills	
Identify your objectives and tasks to be accomplished	
Organise sources of information to meet goals	
Prioritise steps in your work	
Revise and enhance the effectiveness of your work	
Writing skills	
Edit and prepare written materials	
Organise your information to serve your purpose	
Use language, grammar, and punctuation correctly	
Write creatively	



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Step 3. Underline in the table below up to 10 skills you think you should improve or develop. In the right most column, give an example in your opinion that best illustrates how to improve your selected skill.

Read with understanding skills	
Determine the purpose of your reading activity	
Monitor your comprehension in reading	
Analyse the read information	
Integrate new information with your prior knowledge	
Investigative skills	
Reflect on underlying meaning of read information	
Sort read information into categories and classify it	
Compare information and find patterns	
Locate your necessary sources of information	
Planning and organisational skills	
Identify your objectives and tasks to be accomplished	
Organise sources of information to meet goals	
Prioritise steps in your work	
Revise and enhance the effectiveness of your work	
Writing skills	
Edit and prepare written materials	
Organise your written information to serve your purpose	
Use language, grammar, and punctuation correctly	
Write creatively	<i>I'll write every week a short story about my everyday life, in order practice my creative writing skills</i>



3 SUMMARIES - WHAT ARE THEY?

3.1 (D) Summary - The concept

A summary is a written composition that gives the main points **or the core information** in a resource e.g. text, speech, story, article, book, video clip etc.

The main function of a summary is to present the main ideas in a resource.

When you are developing a summary, you should only highlight the most important aspects of the resource, personal opinions should not be included.

A summary can be as short as a few sentences or much longer, depending on the complexity of the text and the level of detail the author wishes to provide to readers.

However, the summaries, **as overviews of text** or other resources, are usually **much shorter than the original material**, usually about one third of the original text.

Any type of content, artistic or technical, offered in various formats, such as written text (on paper or in web pages), video or audio sequences, can be condensed to its bare essentials and presented as a summary.

Artistic or fictional works:

- literary writings: a novel, a story, a poem, a play, an opera.
- artistic work in video format: a movie, a play.
- artistic work in an audio format: a song, an opera, a musical.

Technical and non-fictional:

- writings in scientific field: biology, earth sciences, economics, environment, etc.
- historical writings: description of an historical event, history of a country.
- journalistic articles: news' stories.
- non-fictional works in video format: sports events (a match, a race, a game).
- scientific works in video or audio format: documentaries, conferences, debates).
- a project, a work scenario (to be presented to a leader, or for a financial support).
- any description of food, beverage, or other object in everyday life.
- any description of events, facts, behaviours, conversations, etc. from everyday life.



3.2 (D) Summarisation - The process

Summarising or **summarisation** are synonym terms and describe the activity (or "the process") of developing the summary of a text, article, book, or video sequence.

Summarising is more than retelling: it involves distinguishing important from unimportant information and restating it in as few words as possible.

Summarisation promotes a deep understanding of information: you should identify relationships among main concepts in a text, and link them to your prior knowledge.

Summarisation is considered by specialists to be among the **top ten most effective learning strategies in the history of education**.

3.3 (D) Summarising - The methods

Summarising methods teach you how to select text, reduce it to its main points, and to restate it in as few words as possible.

The summarisation methods' specifics and reports depend on:

1. **the type of content** to be summarised (expositive/narrative, scientific/literary).
2. **the target public's expectations**: what is required or being assessed by the readers of the summary, when presenting it to them.

The three common elements to all summarisation methods: **selection** of important ideas, **rejection** of unnecessary information and **substitution** of long sections in the original work by one sentence expressed in your own words.

Summarisation is a learned process of keeping, deleting, and substituting information. Therefore, one of the greatest gifts school can give you is to teach you:

1. **how to identify relevant information** in any subject you study, and
2. **how to structure information** for meaningful and successful application.

Summarising methods teach you how to carry out proficiently all the above actions.

Summarisation activities have nothing miraculous; Harry Potter cannot do his summarisation homework by using his magical wand.

The big secret of summarisation is simple: you must learn multiple methods of how to do it, you must practice it and you must be persistent.

And most important: trust yourself in knowing what information should be included.



3.4 (L) Types of TEXTS

A **text is a piece of writing** that you read or create.

The type or the characteristics of a text are very important for any work of summarisation on it. It is easier to select the main ideas from certain types of texts, such as narratives (texts "telling a story") then from others, such as expository texts (texts "speaking about").

The classification of a text depends on its purpose, structure and language features.

One of the most commonly used methods for classifying texts is by basing it on the text's purpose and meaning. Using this method of classification, there are three main categories:

1. **Expository texts**
2. **Narrative texts**, and
3. **Argumentative texts**.

An expository text is intended to identify and characterise experiences, facts, situations, and actions in either abstract or real elements. Expository texts are meant to explain, inform or describe and **they are the most frequently used to write structures**. **Expository structures** can be classified into five categories:

- **description**, where the author describes a topic's characteristics, features, attributes, etc. and gives examples.
- **procedure or sequence**: the author lists different activities in their chronological order or enumerates items in a numerical order.
- **comparison**: the author explains how two or more objects, events, experiences, are alike and/or different.
- **cause-effect explanation**: the author presents ideas, events in time, or facts as causes and the resulting effect(s) in time.
- **problem-solution presentation**: the author describes a problem and gives one or more solutions to the problem.

In the expository category, the non-fictional texts have a specific role to inform or to teach the readers. They can come in various formats, depending on the area of use:

- **business**: reports, letters, executive summaries.
- **journalism**: essays, news reports, press releases, sports news.
- **technical communication**: user guides, technical reports or standards.
- **academic and scientific communication**: textbooks, student guides, scientific reports, scientific journals' articles, encyclopedia articles.
- **general reference works**: encyclopedia articles, or on-line, multi-domain informative texts, as the Wikipedia articles.



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A narrative text entertains, instructs or informs readers **by telling a story**.

Narrative texts deal with imaginary or real world and can be fictional (fairy tales, novels, science fiction, horror or adventure stories, fables, myths, legends, etc.) and non-fictional (articles, newspaper reports, historical writings).

Argumentative texts aim is to change the reader's beliefs. They often contain negative qualities or characteristics about something/someone, or try to persuade their readers that an object, product or idea is in some way better than other's.

You should note that **few texts are purely** one type: expository or argumentative texts can contain narration or evaluative elements.

Remember that the text types refer to the meaning of the writing, and they should not **be confused with writing (or other materials) formats**: book, article, letter, report, essay, etc.



3.5 (L) Types of SUMMARIES

Summaries present text information in an abridged form. They can be placed in one of two categories:

Informative summaries - objective reports on the text's content.

Descriptive summaries - objective reports about the text.

Both techniques of summarisation can be applied on expository texts (scientific, technical, or other type of non-fictional works) or on narrative texts, which are usually but not always, literary texts.

Please note that **the main requisite of any summary** is to present a concise and clear presentation of the main ideas that form the meaning of the written work (or of other type of resource), while eliminating the unnecessary details that are not absolutely necessary for the overall understanding.

INFORMATIVE Summaries

Informative summaries accurately convey the information contained in a text or in other type of resource. An informative summary should be objective i.e. "without personal opinions in presenting the ideas in the source text".

Thus, informative summaries are recommended for scientific, non-fictional works or to present objective reports of factual content.

The main types of informative summaries are **outlines, abstracts and synopses**.

Outlines present the plan or the "skeleton" of a written material.

Outlines show the order and the relation between the parts of the written material.

Example: An outline of a **chapter about summarisation**

In the outline below, the titles (in magenta) and explanations (in yellow) show the principal themes in the chapter. The outline next page, being more detailed, can give clues on main ideas and approaches in the chapter.

HOW DO I SUMMARISE?

Discover (What are summary and summarisation?)

Learn (How to summarise? - Methods and tools)

Practice (Write summaries on subjects you know)

Assess your leaning (How well did you learn?)

Learning resources (Books, articles, videos clips and web sites teaching summarisation)



HOW DO I SUMMARISE?

Discover (What are summary and summarisation?)

Summary - The concept (**What is it?**)

Types of texts (**What are they?**)

Types of summaries (**What are they?**)

Summarisation - The process (**What does it mean?**)

Summarising - The methods (**What are they?**)

Examples of summaries

Learn (How to summarise? - Methods and tools)

Summarisation of a text (**How to do it?**)

Reading the text

Background exploration

Text exploration

Notes revision

Writing the summary

Writing of the first draft

Revision of your work

Paraphrasing and Quoting

Practical examples (**How to use methods and tools?**)

Summarising fictional works (**How to deal with it?**)

Writing modes in fictional and non-fictional writings

Subject and dramatic structure

Narrator and characters in a literary work

Time and space indicators in a literary work

Practice (Write summaries on subjects you know)

Write summaries and abstracts for your presentations and exams

Assess your leaning (How well did you learn?)

Learning resources (Videos and web sites teaching summarisation)



Abstracts present the major point of a long piece of text or an article.

Abstracts help readers to decide whether or not they want to read the longer text.

Example: An abstract of a scientific report

The abstract presented below belongs to a scientific report about issues, achievements and shortcomings in the area of **automatic summarisation** - creation of summaries by means of computer programs called "summarising systems". The author - Karen Sparck Jones- very briefly details in the abstract the main points and the conclusion of her forty-page report.

The original title of the report has been kept in the example below.

Automatic summarising: The state of the art

by Karen Sparck Jones

Computer Laboratory, University of Cambridge -UK

This paper in its final form will appear in *Information Processing and Management*, Special Issue on Automatic Summarising, 2007.

Abstract This paper reviews research on automatic summarising in the last decade. This work has grown, stimulated by technology and by evaluation programs. The paper uses several frameworks to organise the review, for summarising itself, for the factors affecting summarising, for systems, and for evaluation.

The review **examines the evaluation strategies applied to summarising**, the issues they raise, and the major programs. It considers the input, purpose and output factors investigated in recent automatic summarising research, and discusses the classes of strategy, extractive and non-extractive, that have been explored, illustrating the range of systems built.

The conclusions drawn are that **automatic summarisation has made valuable progress**, with useful applications, better evaluation, and more task understanding. But **summarising systems are still poorly motivated** in relation to the factors affecting them, and evaluation needs taking much further to engage with the purpose summaries are intended to serve and the contexts in which they are used.

<https://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/archive/ksj21/ksjdigipapers/ipm07.pdf>



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The previous example presents you some information about **software program's ability to summarise texts**.

Automatic summarisation in the IT field has been developed over the past 50 years. Recently, many text summarisers are become freely available on the Internet, and you can you use them on-line. Most of them are designed for the **English language**, and their summarisation consists of the **selection of the most important** sentences in the original text. Hence, the result they give are not suitable for summarisation tasks, as assignments in school settings require.

Example: Automatic summarisation of text

The abstract presented in the previous example has been given to "Feed" a free, on-line software system for automatic summarisation. As you can see, the **computer's summary has only taken identical sentences** from the original text.

<u>The original text</u>	<u>The summary developed by the computer.</u>
<p>Abstract This paper reviews research on automatic summarising in the last decade.</p> <p>This work has grown, stimulated by technology and by evaluation programs. The paper uses several frameworks to organise the review, for summarising itself, for the factors affecting summarising, for systems, and for evaluation. The review examines the evaluation strategies applied to summarising, the issues they raise, and the major programs. It considers the input, purpose and output factors investigated in recent automatic summarising research, and discusses the classes of strategy, extractive and non-extractive, that have been explored, illustrating the range of systems built.</p> <p>The conclusions drawn are that automatic summarisation has made valuable progress, with useful applications, better evaluation, and more task understanding.</p> <p>But summarising systems are still poorly motivated in relation to the factors affecting them, and evaluation needs taking much further to engage with the purpose summaries are intended to serve and the contexts in which they are used</p>	<p>Abstract This paper reviews research on automatic summarising in the last decade.</p> <p>This work has grown, stimulated by technology and by evaluation programs.</p> <p>The conclusions drawn are that automatic summarisation has made valuable progress, with useful applications, better evaluation, and more task understanding.</p> <p>But summarising systems are still poorly motivated in relation to the factors affecting them, and evaluation needs taking much further to engage with the purpose summaries are intended to serve and the contexts in which they are used.</p> <p>http://textcompactor.com/</p>



A synopsis is a brief overview of an article, story, book, film, or other works.

A synopsis is a concise, chronological description of a historical event, news event, historical event, or other experiences as they develop in time.

Example: A synopsis of World War II - as an historical event in XX century

World War II began in 1939, when Germany, led by Adolf Hitler, invaded Poland. Britain and France responded by declaring war on Germany.

But in 1940 Germany rapidly conquered Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France. Italy, an ally of Germany at that time, took Greece and North Africa in 1941.

In 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Despite the Germans' initial quick progress into the Russian heartland, the country's immensity, its brutal winters and the nation's determination would eventually be more than the German army could overcome. After losing the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk in 1943, Germans were slowly forced out of the Soviet territory. **During 1944 and 1945**, Russians pursued their march across eastern Europe, invading the countries in this region and Germany itself.

In June 1944, British and American forces launched the D-Day Normandy invasion, landing in German-occupied France. Several months after, the German army was forced to retreat from France and Paris was liberated.

By early 1945, Allied forces (British, Americans and Soviets) were closing in on Germany from the east and west. The Soviets were the first to reach Berlin, and **Germany surrendered in May 1945**, shortly after the suicide of Adolf Hitler.

In Pacific, the war began in 1941, when Japan attacked the U.S. Navy base at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. By this time, Japan had already been at war with China for several years and had conquered the Chinese territory of Manchuria.

Japan continued war by a massive campaign of expansion throughout China and the Southeast Asia–Pacific region. After fighting several years against Japan, **in early 1945**, Allied forces were closing in on the Japanese home islands.

In August 1945 United States dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Following the huge devastation, Japan surrendered unconditionally and World War II was finished.



DESCRIPTIVE Summaries

Descriptive summaries depict the original text (material) rather than directly presenting the information it contains. A descriptive summary should portray, in an objective way, the text's structure and main themes.

Descriptive summaries often play the role of reviews for fictional or literary works: books, movies, video clips, articles, essays etc. In this case, the descriptive summary **can include statements about sense and significance** of the summarised work.

Example: A descriptive summary of "**A Modest Proposal**", a short writing of fewer than 2000 words by Jonathan Swift. The summary has 132 words and the statement about the sense of this literary work is marked in blue.

A descriptive summary of the essay "A Modest Proposal" (132 words)

"A Modest Proposal is preventing the Children of poor People in Ireland, from being a Burden to their Parents or Country and for making them beneficial to the Public", is a satirical essay written in the 18th century by author Jonathan Swift.

The essay, curtly named "A Modest Proposal", is one of the most savage and ironical pamphlet ever written. The speaking character in the essay, called the "Proposer", is an unknown personage who, "innocently" and "modestly" proposes to combat poverty in (18th century) Ireland "by using the children of Irish poor people as food for wealthy citizens". The essay imitates the style of a scientific social-survey, being organised as a classical rhetoric work defending an idea or principle.

"**A Modest Proposal**" satire shows Swift's outrage at the cruelties and stupidities of his contemporary society. In a broader sense, the pamphlet combats the tendency of modern human to "social cannibalism: the murder of humans in the name of bettering the lives of others".

An executive summary's aim is to describe a project, a specific course of action, or a business proposal when an executive (your boss!) does not have the time to read the original report.

Example: An employee may be asked to submit a 10-page summary of a 100 page long technical (or business) proposal.

In order to achieve this kind of assignment within the stipulated time, the employee should have extensive summarisation skills.



3.6 (L) Examples of summaries

This is an **informative summary** from a Wikipedia fragment of **text about Johannes Gutenberg**, the German who introduced printing to Europe.

A text about Johannes Gutenberg - (194 words)

Johannes Gutenberg (1398 – 1468) was a German goldsmith and publisher who introduced printing to Europe. His introduction of mechanical movable type printing to Europe started the Printing Revolution and is widely regarded as the most important event of the modern period. It played a key role in the scientific revolution and laid the basis for the modern knowledge-based economy and the spread of learning to the masses.

Gutenberg many contributions to printing are: the invention of a process for mass-producing movable type, the use of oil-based ink for printing books, adjustable molds, and the use of a wooden printing press. His truly epochal invention was the combination of these elements into a practical system that allowed the mass production of printed books and was economically viable for printers and readers alike.

In Renaissance Europe, the arrival of mechanical movable type printing introduced the era of mass communication which permanently altered the structure of society. The relatively unrestricted circulation of information—including revolutionary ideas—transcended borders, and captured the masses in the Reformation. The sharp increase in literacy broke the monopoly of the literate elite on education and learning and bolstered the emerging middle class.

The summary of the text (63 words)

The German Johannes Gutenberg introduced printing in Europe. His invention made a decisive contribution in the spread of mass learning and in building the basis of the modern society.

Gutenberg's major invention was a practical system permitting the mass production of printed books. The printed books allowed open circulation of information, and prepared the evolution of society from to the contemporary knowledge-based economy.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Gutenberg



A **descriptive summary** of a two minutes video clip from the "**Speak easy**" series:

A summary of a Speakeasy video (89 words)

The Speakeasy series' first video is illustrating a very simple truth: if someone cannot communicate effectively, then the person will not be able to present their own ideas or knowledge to an audience.

Learning communication techniques i.e. using voice, body language, ability to control emotions, rhythm and logic in narration can help any person improve their performance in oral presentations. Moreover, the most important idea the clip transmits: anyone who is motivated, ambitious and practices communication can learn to be a better public speaker.

<https://vimeo.com/channels/speakeasyeng/138301289>

A **descriptive summary** of the "most powerful love story ever told", Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare, a literary masterpiece:

No fear Shakespeare!

A summary of William Shakespeare's play "Romeo and Juliet"

Shakespeare's play Romeo and Juliet is the world most famous romantic tragedy. In this play, a long lasting dispute between the Montague and Capulet families from the city of Verona causes the death of (Montague) Romeo and of Juliet (a Capulet).

The first half of the play, with jokes and love poetry is more like a comedy: the two teenagers, Romeo and Juliet rush impetuously into love. However, conflict, revenge and secret plots create an intense pressure on them and lead the lovers to finally commit suicide in despair.

Shakespeare compresses the action of the play to four days. By condensing the timeframe, he indicates how the speed of events conspires to bring the two lovers to their tragic end. Conflict and implacable fate, the leading themes of the tragedy, anticipate the play's conclusion: the death of Romeo and Juliet is a sacrifice bringing about the end of the bloody warfare between the two noble families from Verona.

Some trailers of movies after Romeo and Juliet play:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTGWNHa1wIQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeUSzCLONJE>



A **descriptive summary** of 400 words for the fantasy novel "**Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland** by **Lewis Carroll**, a 150 pages book:

A summary of "Alice in the Wonderland"

"**Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland**" is a very popular book for children that adults can also enjoy reading. The author is Charles Dodson, an English writer who published the book in 1865 under the pseudonym of Lewis Carroll.

Through its fantasy story and main theme: "**a growing girl exploring the wonders of world**", the book has been very influential over the years, both in popular culture and in literature. The book is an enigmatic work, and over the years, readers have been puzzled by the language and the logic of Wonderland.

The protagonist of the book is Alice, a seven year old girl who must find her way in a strange world called "Wonderland". During her magic journey through Wonderland, Alice encounters peculiar human-like creatures or talking animals: the White Rabbit, the Caterpillar, the Cheshire Cat, the Mad Hatter, and the Dormouse.

The White Rabbit is Alice's guide and he leads her to many places and adventures through the book. The always-hurrying rabbit is a symbol of the transience of time.

The smiling Cheshire Cat, who can disappear and reappear, is the only character in the entire novel who listens to Alice. The Cat is giving "advice" to Alice and teaches her the strange rules leading the world through which she is traveling.

The Cheshire Cat's smile is a metaphor for Wonderland's magic and it is as famous and enigmatic as Mona Lisa's smile.

Each character teaches Alice something about life and growing up in a hazardous world. Every object or setting in "Alice in the Wonderland" functions as a symbol and often the symbols work together to convey a particular meaning to a scene.

Through intricate symbolism, Lewis Carroll suggests the complexity of life.

This could be the message learned by Alice in her magical, initiatory journey: do not try to find meaning in all the situations you encounter in the "wonder" world of life, do not give up and continue on your way.

Some trailers of movies after "Alice's adventures in the wonderland"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYqrHAcP5ss&list=PL409E6901B69BBECA>

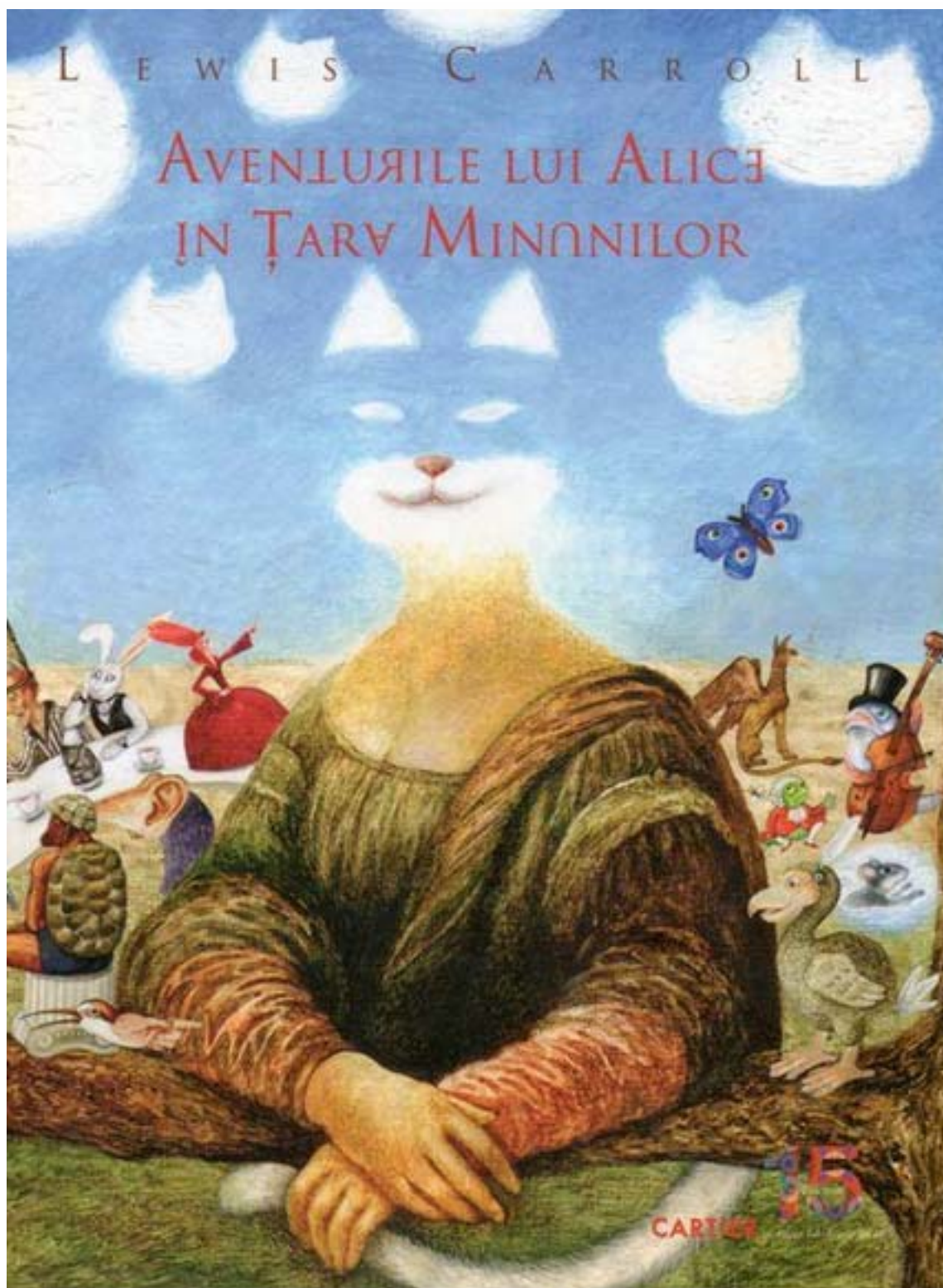
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjMkNrX60mA>



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"Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland" -
Cover book by the Romanian painter Violeta Zabulica-Diordiev.



3.7 (R) learning resources

Here you can find links to further resources:

List of commented links	
Source	ASCD - www.ascd.org
Source title	Teaching students to summarise by Valerie Anderson and Suzanne Hidi
Description	Article about summarising
Link	http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_198812_anderson.pdf
Language	English

List of commented links	
Source	University of new England
Source title	Paraphrasing and summarising
Description	Instructions to paraphrase and summarise
Link	https://www.une.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/13458/WE_Paraphrasing-and-summarising.pdf
Language	English



4 SUMMARISATION OF A TEXT - HOW TO DO IT?

4.1 (D) Discover

Writing a good summary demonstrates that you understand the meaning of a text (or what you are summarising) and you can then communicate in your own words what is important in this material.

There are different ways to develop a summary. They depend on your aim, the type of content you want to summarise and your audience. However, in all cases you should take into consideration two activities:

1. **READING** the text, and
2. **WRITING** the summary.

Reading and writing cannot be separated from each other, when you want to summarise a written material. In-depth, reflective reading will help you to realise quality writing works for your scholar assignments or for other purposes.

4.2 (L) **READING** the text

An effective reading strategy is important as you begin to summarise a text.

Such a reading strategy consists of at least three stages you should go through:

1. **BACKGROUND exploration** before **READING**
2. **TEXT exploration** during **READING**, which could comprise:
 - **SKIMMING** the text.
 - **READING** the text thoroughly.
 - **SEARCHING** for meanings.
 - **TAKING** notes annotation.
4. **NOTES' revision and organisation** after **READING**

Background exploration is the first stage in the work of summarisation, when you search for information about the text: the author, the subject, the context and purpose of the writing.

Text exploration is the stage you read critically the text and try to identify, and prioritise the main ideas or facts - for an expository text-, or the most important event and characters, for a narrative writing.

Text exploration comprises of taking notes on content or annotate directly on pages.

Notes revision after **READING**, is the last stage in the reading process, when you organise your notes and the (possible) use of visual tools to express in graphic format your understanding of the text.



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BACKGROUND exploration

Before reading the text, you need to summarise and explore the background of this work. This could bring you useful information, that could be later included in your summary.

Several questions can help you in gathering information about the text:

Who is the author of the text?

What work by the same author have I already read?

What is the main subject or theme of the text?

What do I already know about this subject?

What similar readings have I had in other courses?

Why did the teacher/instructor assign this reading? (**the most important questions you need to answer**)

If you are not familiar with either the author or the text subject, try to find auxiliary information in a library or browse the internet, check out YouTube or Wikipedia.

TEXT exploration

Text exploration means an effective reading process, when you should:

1. **skim** the text.
2. **read the entire text** straight through.
3. **search for most important** information or elements in text.
3. **re-read the text** in an active manner: take notes and mark words and sections.

SKIMMING the text

Skimming means to read the text very quickly (**diagonal reading**).

Skimming helps you to detect the important elements in that text. During skimming, pay attention to:

- titles, headings, subheadings in text.
- any bold, underlined, quoted, or highlighted text.
- pictures, graphs, charts, or images of any nature.

In skimming the text, you read only the first sentence in paragraphs.

Finally, try to find out the answer to the question:

What is the author talking about through this text?

READING the text thoroughly

After skimming the text, **read the text straight through**.

Try to understand meanings, to make connections and to identify the most important elements stated by the author:

1. **the topic and the main ideas** or characters and events (for a narrative text).
2. **the supporting details** for these ideas.
3. **the topic sentences** and **the concluding sentence**, if they exist in the text.



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SEARCHING for meaning and for structure

A **topic** is the word or the phrase to which everything in a text refers back.

The **main idea** in a text is the most important piece of information contained in that text. A **supporting (secondary) idea** is complementary to the main idea – it gives additional details about the main idea.

A **main idea** in a text includes a topic and the principal statements about that topic. The main concept is often expressed in a sentence, which is called a "**topic sentence**".

Example: The topic and the idea in a text

Examine the fragment of text below where both topics and ideas are highlighted.

"The Republic of **Ireland** occupies most of the island of Ireland, off the coast of England and Wales. Its capital, Dublin, is the birthplace of **writers including Oscar Wilde and Samuel Beckett**. Nicknamed the "**Emerald Isle**" for its lush landscape of rolling green hills, **it's dotted with castles and ancient Celtic sites**. Stories of warriors with all the knowledge of the world, **and leprechauns hiding their gold at the end of a rainbow** add to the **mysterious appeal** of Ireland."

The topic in this text is **Ireland** and the main idea is: **Ireland is a fairyland "on an emerald isle" and a country with exceptional rich cultural heritage and history.**

The sequence of main ideas, ordered as it is presented in the text defines what we can call "**the discourse meaning**".

The discourse meaning is the "**binder**" of the ideas within the text.

The detailed discourse meaning contains the main ideas, and the supporting ideas. Starting from the discourse meaning and some details extracted from the detailed discourse meaning it is possible to create the summary of the text.

If you want to extract and formulate the main idea, it is recommended to read the text while defining the sequences that contain **distinct information regarding a certain single fact, event, action** executed by one or more characters.

Then **write this information** in a single statement (a short sentence or phrase).

To extract and formulate a supporting (secondary) idea, you need to read again the sequence of text from which you extracted the main idea. Try to identify details about the facts, events, action described by the main idea.

Then formulate the details about the main idea in one or more sentences.



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A simple, effective method that can help you to identify the topics and the most important ideas in the text you want to condense into a summary, is to formulate guiding questions with help of **Who? What? When? Why?**

What are the major facts, events or characters described in text?

What are the relationships between ideas, facts, characters, events in text?

Why did the author state or express certain ideas in text?

When did the text action take place?

Where did the text action take place?

By answering a clear set of questions, you can draft your summary.

Other important recommendations, when you are reading the text you want to summarise, is to search for the overall characteristics of the text:

- **the text type**: narrative, expository, argumentative.

- **the categories** of information, if it exists in the text.

- **the text structure**: introduction, main body of information, conclusion, etc.

Detecting a text type, categories and structure can give you great help in detecting what is important in that text.

Example: Categories of information in a text

The following text is about cougars: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cougar> .

In the table on the next page, the text is divided in paragraphs and the main categories of information in the text are highlighted.

The cougar, also commonly known as the mountain lion, panther or puma, is a large felid native to the Americas. An adaptable, generalist species, the cougar is found in most American habitat types. It is the second-heaviest cat in the New World, after the jaguar. Secretive and largely solitary by nature, the cougar is probably considered both nocturnal and crepuscular, although sightings during daylight hours do occur. The cougar is an ambush predator and pursues a wide variety of prey. Primary food sources are particularly deer, but also livestock. It also hunts species as small as insects and rodents. Cougar cat prefers habitats with dense underbrush and rocky areas for stalking, but can also live in open areas. The cougar is territorial and survives at low population densities. Individual territory sizes depend on terrain, and abundance of prey. Cougar is reclusive and avoids people. Fatal attacks on humans are rare, but in North America have been increasing in recent years as people enter their territories. Prolific hunting following European colonisation of the Americas and the ongoing human development of cougar habitat has caused populations to drop dramatically. In particular, the cougar was extirpated in eastern North America in the beginning of the 20th century, except for an isolated Florida subpopulation.



Cougar geographical habitat:

The cougar, also commonly known as **the mountain lion, panther or puma**, is a large felid native to the Americas. An adaptable, generalist species, the cougar is found in most American habitat types.

Cougar characteristics and behaviour:

Secretive and largely solitary by nature, the cougar is probably considered both nocturnal and crepuscular, although sightings during daylight hours do occur.

Cougar hunting habit

The cougar is an ambush predator and pursues a wide variety of prey. Primary food sources are particularly deer, but also livestock. It also hunts species as small as insects and rodents.

Cougar's habitat features

Cougar cat prefers habitats with dense underbrush and rocky areas for stalking, but can also live in open areas. The cougar is territorial and survives at low population densities. Individual territory sizes depend on terrain, and abundance of prey.

Cougar and humans

Cougar is reclusive and avoids people. Fatal attacks on humans are rare, but in North America have been increasing in recent years as people enter their territories.

Conservation status

Prolific hunting following European colonisation of the Americas and the ongoing human development of cougar habitat has caused populations to drop dramatically. In particular, the cougar was extirpated in eastern North America in the beginning of the 20th century, except for an isolated Florida subpopulation.

TAKING notes

Reread the text and **analyse** it. Then **divide the text** into sections (fragments, parts, paragraphs), **annotate it** (write comments on the margin of pages) and **highlight** sections in the original material, in order to emphasise:

- the topics and key words.
- main ideas, topic and concluding sentences.
- text type, texts' categories of information and text's structure.

Take notes on the following:

- the source (author--first/last name, title, date and place of publication, URL, etc.).
- the major ideas, facts, actions, events in text.
- the supporting explanations of main ideas (e.g. reasons/causes or effects).



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Finally, outline the text, in order to create the skeleton of your summary. Write down the support points from each section in the outline you created.

If the text is short and fragmented, **outline each paragraph** (section) in the text.

All the methods and approaches recommended previously encourage you to perform "reflective reading", the mandatory earlier stage to any attempt to summarise a text.

NOTES' revision and organisation

After thoroughly reading the text, organise all your notes into an outline-sketch including the main ideas and the supporting points. Then, consider what to include or not include in your summary, within the context of your assignment.

As a final step, you can use graphic tools to express your understanding of the text:

1. use **Mind Maps** to classify the text's elements: events, facts, characters, actions and ideas, in a radial hierarchy.
2. use **Concept Maps** to visualise relationships between ideas in text.
3. use **Outliners** to structure and prioritise the elements of text.
4. use **Web** to show different categories of related information in text.



4.3 (L) WRITING the summary

When writing your summary, you should consider two stages to go through:

1. **WRITING of the first draft.**
2. **REVISION of your work.**

WRITING of the first draft

The recommendation any expert would give when you start writing is "**Put your text away and try to write your summary from your notes**".

Start your summary with an **identification of the work**. Clearly express the context information about the text you summarise: title, author and the main theme.

For this first part of your summary, you can use the framework of a typical format.

Example: Frames for the first paragraph

The article/book "(Title of the article/book)" by (authors' name) has been written-published-created in (year).

The book "Harry Potter the Philosopher Stone" by J. K. Rowling has been first published in 1997.

"(Title of the article/book)" by (authors' name) is (information and comments on the article/book).

"Harry Potter the Philosopher Stone" by J. K. Rowling is the first novel from Harry Potters' series, one in the most in demand among young readers.

(Authors' name)'s article/book/play "(Title of the written material)" is a (considerations on the written material)

William Shakespeare's play "Romeo and Juliet" is a famous tragedy and the most powerful love story ever told.

If you are summarising a **text from the public domain or from a source not requiring copyright**, it is mandatory to mention your source.

After the first paragraph, mention, as briefly as possible, the major aspects, facts or reasons presented or discussed in the text.

Use reporting verbs to introduce the text's ideas. The reporting verb is generally in the present tense and should be neutral.

Example: Reporting verbs you can use in a summary:

state, report, explain, discuss, illustrate, observe



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In the first draft, try to frame simple sentences. Then insert words, phrases or short sentences in order to logically link your already formulated sentences.

Example: Words and phrases to link ideas in your summary

therefore, because, nevertheless, however, on the other hand, such as

Write using "**summarising language.**" Present the material in a neutral fashion.

Your reader or listener needs to be reminded that this is not your own work.

Use "reminder phrases" that remind readers or listeners of your role: you are the "summariser" not the author of the material presented.

Example: Frames to emphasise your role as "summariser"

Frames that are suitable when you summarise an article or a fictional work:

(author's last name) suggests (main idea)

According to (authors' last name), (main idea)

(author's last name)'s article on (topic) discusses the (main idea)

(author's last name) in his/her work, argues that (main idea)

According to "(Title of the article)" (main idea) has a major impact on (topic)

In your summary use "cue phrases" to indicate the degree of importance of the ideas you selected from the original text.

Example: Cue phrases to express the importance of an idea

Some words and phrases indicate centrality:

it is important to note that..., significantly, in conclusion..., etc.

Others phrases indicate ideas that should be scored lower in terms of importance:

for example, hardly, impossible, etc.

At this stage, it is also essential **to develop structured sections** (paragraphs): divide your summary in well-defined parts (called **sections or paragraphs**).

Your first draft must be a complete overview of the text you want to summarise.

Avoid including in your draft examples, anecdotes and other redundant information from the text. Use discourse markers that reflect the organisation and controlling idea from the original, for example: classification, chronological order, cause-effect, and comparison-contrast.

Conclude you summary with a final statement. This statement should reflect the meaning of the article/book/text from the author's standpoint.

For scientific, non-fictional works, be careful not to include your own opinions.



REVISING the work

A first draft of a summary always requires improvements, so it is essential to revise it.

Refer back to the original text to make sure your summary reflects fairly the authors' ideas and his/her degree of certainty on the subject.

Your summary should clarify the original text, using your own words. During this stage, it is recommended to check for logical arrangement of your summary.

It is also essential to adjust the length of your summary: **it must be shorter than the original**, but keep in mind that the length depends on the purpose of the summary.

If the purpose of your summary is to give a general idea of what is in the original, the summary can be very short, less than one percent of the original. This is the case with descriptive summaries of books, plays, movies.

The other extreme is the summary, which contains all the necessary information, so the user has no need to read the original e.g. **executive summaries**.

For scientific, non-fictional works or for short literary writings, you can tailor your summary to one third of the original text.

The final revision of your work should include the following two steps.

First, verify if you respected the "**10 commands**" of summarisation:

- You included all major ideas** in the text.
- You logically linked** each section in your summary.
- You were objective** and wrote your summary at third person.
- You avoided redundancy** and repetition.
- You limited the length** of your summary.
- You respected the rules** of paraphrasing and quoting.
- You did not reproduce literally sentences** from the original text.
- You did not introduce your ideas** or opinions in the summary.
- You did not criticise** the original source.
- You did not "rewrite"** the whole original text.

Then, assess your summary and verify if:

- the meaning is the same in your summary as it is in the original text
- you expressed the text's ideas in your own words
- your summary is shorter than the original text
- the sources of information you used have been clearly referenced in your summary.



PARAPHRASING and QUOTING

Paraphrasing signifies restating an original wording in "**parallel phrases**". It means to express in your own words the author's wording. You can paraphrase a word, a sentence, or a group of sentences, and even a short story, like a fairytale or a fable.

Paraphrasing has similar features with summarising: in both cases, you must use your own words to express or describe an author's ideas.

A simple strategy can help you to develop paraphrasing sections in your summary:

1. read carefully the fragment you want to paraphrase
2. underline any subject-specific words and **try to find substitutes** for them
4. try to express in a different way the information in **groups of words**
5. **put your text out of your sight and write the ideas in the text from memory.**

Example: Paraphrase the story in a fable

You will find below a good example of paraphrasing a fable by Aesop, an Ancient Greek fabulist and storyteller.

The fable "The North Wind and the Sun" by Aesop

"The Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger. Suddenly they saw a traveller coming down the road, and the Sun said: "I see a way to decide our dispute. Whichever of us can cause that Traveller to take off his cloak shall be regarded as the stronger. You begin."

"So the Sun retired behind a cloud, and the Wind began to blow as hard as it could upon the Traveller. However, the harder he blew the tighter the Traveller wrapped his cloak round him, until at last the Wind had to give up in despair.

Then the Sun came out and shone in all his glory upon the Traveller, who soon found it too hot to walk with his cloak on."

The story paraphrased in the a Wikipedia page

"The fable story concerns a competition between the North Wind and the Sun to decide which is the stronger of the two. The challenge was to make a passing Traveller remove his cloak. "

"However hard the Wind blew, the Traveller only wrapped his cloak tighter to keep warm, but when the Sun shone, the Traveller was overcome with the heat and took his cloak off."

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0298.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrFUYAJXWLU>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_North_Wind_and_the_Sun



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Quoting (or quotation) means to use a particular word, phrase, sentence, or even fragment as it appears in the original text. When you quote from a text, you must to reproduce identically the original wording and to put it in double quotation marks.

While paraphrasing is an effective **way to describe the author's ideas**, quotation **allows you to present the way those ideas are expressed** by author of a text.

When you summarise a text, it can be challenging to express the original ideas using your own words, or to develop a very compacted restatement of them.

In this case, you can use quotation. It is also recommended to use quotation when it is necessary to convey to readers the author's particular wording or specific language.

Keep in mind that a **quotation should not stand by itself in a single sentence**, especially if you are summarising a scientific, a non-fictional text, an article, etc.

Another important rule is to use quotation only **if you have the acknowledgement** of the source in your paper. European copyright regulations **permit you to quote only short fragments from a book** or from a text that is not subject to copyright laws.

Example: Quoting classical authors

You will find below an example of quoting from classical authors, who wrote about the moral Aesop's fable "The North Wind and the Sun".

The fable "The North Wind and the Sun"

"The Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger. Suddenly they saw a traveller coming down the road, and the Sun said: "I see a way to decide our dispute. Whichever of us can cause that Traveller to take off his cloak shall be regarded as the stronger. You begin."

"So the Sun retired behind a cloud, and the Wind began to blow as hard as it could upon the Traveller. However, the harder he blew the more closely did the Traveller wrapped his cloak around him, until at last the Wind had to give up in despair. Then the Sun came out and shone in all his glory upon the Traveller, who soon found it too hot to walk with his cloak on."

The fable moral

While modern authors consider that, the fable moral could be "**Kindness effects more than severity**", antique author Avianus has a more political conclusion for this fable: "**They cannot win who starts with threats**".

The classical French author La Fontaine, in his poem that retold the fable, concludes: "**Gentleness does more than violence**", whilst the English writer Walter Crane interprets fable sense as: "**True strength is not bluster**".



4.4 (L) Practical examples - How to use methods and tools

HOW to find the main topic and ideas

Larger texts can include more than one topic and main idea. In this case, it is possible to have the topics and the main ideas written in bold, or as heading titles.

If the text you need to summarise provides a 'Table of Contents', the titles in this table can give you important clues in detecting the topics and main ideas in that text.

Example: Detecting the topics and the main ideas in a text

The 'Table of Contents' of this Wikipedia article on Lion gives you clues on topics and subjects treated in this article. See the link: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion>

Table Contents - The Lion

- 1. Taxonomy and evolution of Lion**
- 2. Physical Characteristics of Lion**
- 3. Behaviour of Lions**
- 4. Distribution and habitat**
- 5. Population and conservation status**
- 6. Cultural significance**

The example above shows you **the categories of information** you should search in any expository text about felines or animals in other species: characteristics, habitat, behaviour, population living in the wilderness and conservation status, etc.

Example: Skimming a text to detect categories

Consider any article (from the Internet or a book) describing the Lion as a big cats species. See, for example, the Wikipedia presentation about leopard:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leopard>

or the National Geographic pages:

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/lion/#lion-male-roar.jpg>

If you skim (read in diagonal) any of these informative texts on felines, you can easily **detect the same main themes**: physical characteristics, subspecies, behaviours, habitat, and conservation status.

Consider the next example about how to summarise a text describing a natural environment. The first table simply presents you the text. In the second table, the text has highlighted elements, in order to show how emphasising words and sentences can make the summarisation process easier.



- EXPLAIN -

Example: Finding the topic and the main idea(s) in a text

The Wikipedia of 136 words text at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Savanna>

A savannah is a grassland ecosystem characterised by the trees being sufficiently widely spaced so that the canopy does not close. The open canopy allows sufficient light to reach the ground to support an unbroken layer consisting of grasses. Savannas maintain an open canopy despite a high tree density.

It is often believed that savannas feature widely spaced, scattered trees. However, in many savannas, tree densities are higher and trees are more regularly spaced than in forests. The South American savannah have densities of trees similar to or higher than that found in South American tropical forests. Similarly, the Guinean and the Australian savannah have a tree density comparable with the forest in the region. Savannas are frequently in a transitional zone between forest and desert or grassland. Savannah covers approximately 20% of the Earth's land area.

The text with highlighted elements

A savannah is a grassland ecosystem characterised by the trees being sufficiently widely spaced so that the canopy does not close. The open canopy allows sufficient light to reach the ground to support an unbroken layer consisting of grasses. Savannas maintain an open canopy despite a high tree density. It is often believed that savannas feature widely spaced trees. However, in many savannas, tree densities are higher and trees are more regularly spaced than in forests. The South American savannah have densities of trees similar to or higher than that found in South American tropical forests. Similarly, the Guinean and the Eastern Australian savannas have a tree density comparable with the forest in the region. Savannas are frequently situated in a transitional zone between forest and desert. Savannah covers approximately 20% of the Earth's land area.

Topic, main and supporting ideas

The main topic is: savannah

Main ideas in text are:

1. Savannas are a grassland ecosystems.
2. Savannas maintain an open canopy despite a high tree density.
3. Savannas are in transitional zones between forest and desert or grassland.

Supporting ideas in text:

Savannas have tree density comparable with the forests in the region. (supports idea no 2)

Summary of the text (36 words)

Savannas are a grassland ecosystems. They maintain an open canopy with a tree density comparable with the forest in the region.

Savannas often make a transition between forest and desert, and cover about 20% of the Earth land area.



- EXPLAIN -

Example: Mark an electronic text in view of summarisation

The summary in table below has been completed after emphasising the topic (in magenta), the principal ideas, (marked in yellow) and the supporting details (in blue) in the original text. The comment written in red shows what is really important in this text - the main idea.

The text to summarise (192 words)

Lions are the most socially inclined of all wild felines, most of which remain quite solitary in nature. Lions are predatory carnivore with two types of social organisation.

Some lions are residents, living in groups of related lionesses, their mates, and offspring. Such a group is called a pride. Females form the stable social unit in a pride and do not tolerate outside females. Although extremely large prides, consisting of up to 30 individuals, have been observed, the average pride consists of five or six females, their cubs of both sexes, and one or two males. The males associated with a pride tend to mostly patrol their territory while lionesses do the hunting for their pride.

The second organisational behaviour is labelled nomads, who range widely and move about sporadically, either singularly or in pairs. The area a pride occupies is called a pride area, whereas that by a nomad lion is a range. Note that a lion may switch lifestyles; nomads may become residents and vice versa.

Males, as a rule, live at least some portion of their lives as nomads, and some are never able to join another pride.

My Comment: Lion social behaviour - both types of social organisation should be mentioned.

The summary (73 words)

Lions manifest the most pronounced sociality in any felid species.

Lions can be residents in a pride - a social group consisting one or two males, several females and their offspring. Lionesses form the stable unit among the residents of a pride.

Other social behaviour refers to nomads, - pairs or lions moving across a wide territory.

A lion can switch "social" status: he may become resident in a pride after being nomad.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion>



- E X P L A I N -

Example: Using questions to identify the main topics in a material

Consider the well-known animated film "**The Lion King**". You can easily develop a summary of this movie if you find out the answer to several guiding questions (see left column) in the table below.

<u>Guiding questions to summarise the "Lion King" movie</u>	<u>The summary of "Lion King" movie in 150 words</u>
Who produced the movie and when? The movie was produced 1994 by Walt Disney Studios.	The movie "Lion King", an animated musical and adventure film was produced in 1994 by Disney Studios
What type of film is it? It is an animated musical and adventure film.	Several well-known American artists and singers provided the Lion King speaking voice.
Who plays the role of the main character? The main character, Simba's speaking voice is provided by several American actors and singers.	The movie tells the story of Simba, a lion prince born in Africa. Nevertheless, Simba's uncle Scar wants to become King, and plots with the hyenas to kill Simba's father. The King is killed and Simba is led to believe by Scar that it was his fault. Simba flees the Lion kingdom in shame. After years of exile in desert, Simba is returns home to overthrow the usurper and become the Lion King.
What story does this movie tell? A Lion prince named Simba is born in Africa. His uncle Scar wants to become King and plots with the hyenas to kill Simba and his father. The Lion King is killed and Simba is led to believe by Scar that it was his fault. Simba flees the kingdom in shame and lives in the desert. After years of exile, Simba returns home to overthrow the usurper and become the Lion King.	The Lion King's original scenario was inspired by two biblical stories, Joseph's and Moses', and by the William Shakespeare play, Hamlet.
What are the similarities with other known fictional, or literary works? The Lion King is a Disney original story inspired by the biblical Joseph and Moses stories and by the William Shakespeare play, Hamlet.	"Simba the Lion searches for his identity. His eagerness to please others and penchant for testing his boundaries gets him into trouble." <i>- An anonymous comment on the Internet -</i>

The trailer of the movie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sj1MT05IAA>



HOW to use frames in your summary

You can use "reminder phrases" or frames that remind readers or listeners of your role: you are the "summariser" not the author of the material, which is presented.

Example: Frames to emphasise your role as "summariser"

Suitable frames are highlighted in blue, while ideas are in yellow in article or a fictional work below.

The text to summarise (198 words)

For most people writing is an extremely difficult task if they are trying to grapple in their language with new ideas and new ways of looking at them. Sitting down to write can be an agonising experience, which does not necessarily get easier with the passage of time and the accumulation of experience. For this reason, you need to reflect upon and analyse your own reactions to the task of writing.

That is to say, the task will become more manageable if you learn how to cope with your own particular ways of avoiding or putting off the moment when you start writing.....

In general a routine, of regular writing times alone, seems to be one ingredient that is essential for many writers.

Even if nothing happens, it might be a good idea to allot a period in front of a pad or screen rather than rushing off to the internet, the library or your friends in search of inspiration. Most books on study skills recommend drawing up some kind of timetable for your work, and even the most arbitrary of rules can serve a useful purpose.

Gordon Taylor - A Student's Writing Guide
(Cambridge Press - 2009)

The summary (65 words)

The author of the text stresses the difficulty of writing tasks, manifested in people the tendency to postpone them.

In the author's opinion, reflecting upon own reactions is the first step in dealing with writing avoidance.

Designated lone writing times, staying away from the screen, library or Internet, together with a daily routine for study and work, are, in his opinion, helpful to overcome tendencies to avoid writing.

<https://nbecerra.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/gwe.pdf>



4.5 (L) Summarising FICTIONAL WORKS -How to deal with it?

WRITING MODES in fictional and non-fictional works

Writing modes refer to the methods by which written work is developed or the ways the author conveys the information to readers.

The most frequently used writing modes correspond to the classical **rhetorical modes**, or "**modes of discourse**".

The modes of discourse describe categories, conventions and purposes **of language-based communication**, - writing and speaking. They are the following:

1. **narration**
2. **description**
3. **exposition**
4. **argumentation**

The previous writing modes **are employed in both fictional (literary) and non-fictional works**. They were also emphasised in chapter's section **3.1.2 Types of TEXTS**, where a general classification of written texts, based on the criteria of purpose and meaning, was made.

A narration tells a story. Narrations comprise of characteristic elements through which the author presents the story: the general perspective (personal or impersonal), the rendering "voice" (which "tells" the story), the time perspective (present, past, future, etc.). Any narration includes a personal character or a non-personal voice, **the narrator**, is what author uses to convey the story to the readers.

A narration can be identified by the presence of characters, sequences of actions informally or chronologically connected.

A description is a writing style consisting of a presentation (in words) of objects, experiences, situations, characters, etc. A description is the typical way to communicate **secondary ideas**, by focusing on all kinds of detail, mostly sensorial: colour, texture, size, material, scent, relative position, etc.

A description can be identified by the frequent use of nouns and adjectives and the relatively few action verbs.

A exposition usually communicates information. The purpose of exposition is to explain and analyse ideas, facts, actions and situations. That is why exposition is frequently used at the beginning of a story to provide the background information to readers.

Exposition is also used in **transitions**, to aid readers to understand new scenes or contexts in the written work.



- E X P L A I N -

Argumentation is a writing style where the author tries to prove the validity of an idea, theory or point of view. Argumentation is also called **the persuasive style**, because its purpose is to attempt to change the reader's opinion or point of view.

As mentioned in section 3.1.2 Type of TEXTS, few writings use only one style of discourse. One can find in a narrative piece of text expository or descriptive fragments. Other commonly used writing styles are dialogues and monologues.

A dialogue is the narrative style consisting of a transcript of a conversation between two or more characters. Dialogues bring dynamism in a story, create the impression of authenticity, and serve as indirect means of description.

A dialogue can be identified by the use of use of certain verbs i.e. say, state, ask, request, etc. followed by the actual transcript of the words of the characters.

A monologue is a narrative style consisting of the transcript of the inner ideas or feelings of a character. The monologue can be identified by the uninterrupted speech of a character and the absence of verbal responses.

SUBJECT and DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

If you want to summarise a fictional or literary work, make sure you do not confuse **the theme** of the work with its subject. **Subject** is a topic, which acts as a foundation for a literary writing while a **theme is an opinion expressed on the subject**.

For example, a writer may choose **a subject of war** for his story and the theme of a story may be writer's personal opinion that war is a curse for humanity. The **subject of a literary work** is the totality of the events, developed in space and time, as reflected in the literary text.

The subject is usually organised as a sequence of "moments" or "points", which define the **dramatic structure** of the literary text:

1. **exposition** –the part of the story that defines the initial background.
2. **plot (intrigue)** – the point when a conflict is created and triggers a sequence of causally interconnected events.
3. **development of the action** – the sequence of events triggered by the plot.
4. **climax** – the moment or point of highest dramatic intensity, usually a turning point in the evolution of the events.
5. **resolution** – the point that reveals the resolution of the conflict.

Some modern literary works do not follow exactly the above listed dramatic structure: the moments cannot be clearly delimited, or in the order presented.



- E X P L A I N -

The following signs can help you to identify the dramatic structure of a text.

The Exposition usually contains the space and time indicators of the action; it is a moment without dramatic intensity, it often contains descriptive elements.

The Plot (intrigue) is a tense moment, usually short, that triggers the conflict.

The Development of the action is the longest part of the work; and it describes the actual sequence of events, and plot twists, more or less emotionally tense.

The climax is the moment of maximum intensity of the conflict, when it seems to be no solution for the crisis; the plot is often short from a temporal perspective.

Resolution reflects the new equilibrium established after the conflict has been resolved.

Example: The dramatic structure of a literary work

A well-known children's story, where the dramatic structure is highlighted in colours.

The three little pigs' story

Exposition

Once upon a time, there were three little pigs. One pig built a house of straw while the second pig built his house with sticks. They built their houses very quickly and then sang and danced all day because they were lazy.

The third little pig worked hard all day and built his house of bricks.

Plot

A big bad wolf saw the two little pigs while they danced and played and thought, "What juicy tender meals they will make!" He chased the two pigs and they ran and hid in their houses.

Development of the action

The big bad wolf went to the first house and huffed and puffed and blew the house down in minutes. The frightened little pig ran to the second pig's house that was made of sticks. The big bad wolf now came to this house and huffed and puffed and blew the house down in hardly any time. Now, the two little pigs were terrified and ran to the third pig's house that was made of bricks.

Climax

The big bad wolf tried to huff and puff and blow the house down, but he could not. He kept trying for hours but the house was very strong and the little pigs were safe inside. He tried to enter through the chimney but the third little pig boiled a big pot of water and kept it below the chimney. The wolf fell into it and died.

Resolution

The two little pigs now felt sorry for having been so lazy. They too built their houses with bricks and lived happily ever after.



CHARACTERS of a literary work

A **literary character** has a fictional identity distinct from any real character, even if it is modelled in the real world. Literary characters are classified as:

- **main characters (protagonists), secondary, episodic** (degree of importance).
- **individual, collective** (degree of individualisation).
- **static** (who doesn't change) **or round** (complex, nuanced) characters.

Writers use various **techniques to depict characters** in their literary works:

- **directly**: through the narrator voice, through the voice of other characters, or by self-characterisation.
- **indirectly**: through character's actions, attitudes or language.

Relationship with other characters, the environment they live in, clothing and other indirect techniques to describe a character in literary work.

If you want to extract the description of a literary character for your summarisation work, it is recommended to go through several steps:

Read the text carefully

Determine the status of the character with respect to:

- the degree of participation in the action (protagonist, secondary, episodic).
- the degree of individualisation (individual, collective).
- the degree of characterisation for a certain human behaviour or trait.

Define the main traits of the character. Consider and then illustrate the traits identified, by means of citations or by indicating meaningful events or situations.

Select meaningful passages to illustrate the physical or psychological traits of the character and the techniques of characterisation used.

Illustrate through examples the techniques of characterisations identified.

Present the relationship between the considered character and other characters.

Finally, refer to the literary means and methods of characterisation that build the portrait of the character.

The NARRATOR in a literary work

The **narrator** is "a voice" in the text and **should not be confused with the author**.

The narrator is a human storyteller and can be:

- **subjective** - emotionally involved in the story.
- **objective** - emotionally uninvolved, detached.
- **omniscient** - knowing how and what the characters think, the reasons for their actions etc.
- **narrator-character** - a character participating in its own narration.
- **"the voice"** - a storyteller that cannot be identified with a specific character.



- E X P L A I N -



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- E X P L A I N -

To identify the status of the narrator, check the person of the verb and pronoun. If the narration uses the first person, then the narrator is also a character in the story. If the narration uses the third person, the narrator is not a character, but just an impersonal voice.

Some particular **clues can indicate the emotional involvement** of the narrator: the use of the first person singular, together with comments, verbs in the imperative and expressive punctuation, show that the narrator is subjective.

TIME and SPACE indicators

The indicators of time are clues that define the sequence of the actions in a text. In order to identify the time indicators, one should look for adverbs of time, nouns that designate certain moments of the day or week, as well as months, seasons, years, historical landmarks, numerals indication the time of the day, etc.

The space indicators specify or suggest where the actions take place. The space indicators are commonly encoded in words that indicate **the place of the action**: adverbs of place, nouns, geographical references or landmarks.

The place may be:

- **outdoors**: in nature, in the forest, a lake, or a park etc.
- **indoors**: a room, a building, a home.
- **real**: a village, a city, a country, etc.
- **imaginary / fantastic**: the realm of the fairies, the realm beyond.
- **earthly**: the garden, the street.
- **cosmic**: the sky, the moon, the galaxy.

The indicators of time and space help you to better understand the action and the facts of writing, fictional or non-fictional. If time and space are important elements of the subject or the ideas in the text you want to summarise, then you must specify them.



EXAMPLE of a summary - the plot and the protagonist of a play

The descriptive summary of one of the absolute masterpieces of humanity: **King Lear** by **William Shakespeare**

The summary below was developed from the Wikipedia wonderful presentation.

No fear Shakespeare!

A summary of William Shakespeare's play "King Lear"

The play. King Lear is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare, one of his greatest works. The play depicts "the tragic consequences and the gradual descent into madness of the title character, after giving his kingdom to his two oldest daughters, based on their flattery of him". The tragedy is a masterpiece of probing observations on the nature of human suffering and kinship.

The plot. Lear, the king of Britain, decides to divide his kingdom among his three daughters. The largest portion of the kingdom will go to the daughter who best expresses her love to him. Goneril and Regan, the older daughters, offer their father flattering words. Only Cordelia, Lear's youngest and favorite daughter, give him a simple, honest speech. King Lear is deceived by her answer and banishes Cordelia. The oldest daughters inherit Britain, Lear's kingdom. But Lear quickly learns he made a terrible decision: Goneril and Regan humiliate and treat him cruelly, and conspire to kill him. Betrayed by his daughters Lear runs away from their houses, accompanied only by his mocking Fool and two loyal nobles. The noble man who warned Lear of his daughter's plots is brutally punished with blindness.

Lear slowly descends into complete madness.

Married with the French king, Cordelia comes with an army to help his father.

The French are defeated but Lear, Cordelia, Goneril and Regan die. Lear's loyal noble men will take care of the kingdom, under a great shadow of sorrow.

The protagonist. King Lear, the central character of the tragedy is one of Shakespeare's most complex characters. Lear is revealed as being naive and kind, passionate and cruel, unpleasant and sympathetic. His absurd eagerness to believe empty flatteries leads to the death of himself and many other people.

But Lear is one character whose punishment far exceeds his foolish errors.

Throughout the play, the audience is permitted to see how Lear learns from his mistakes and becomes humble, caring and generally a better human being.

King Lear summary on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g17ziHN59tg>

And the play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JylxvHvdtA>



4.6 (L) THINGS TO REMEMBER - Writing a summary

To verify if you went through all the stages necessary in order to write a good summary, see the table below shows you the activities that you had to perform:

<i>Read, Understand, Focus</i>
Read the text - Read and understand the text carefully, and ask yourself questions about this text
Use prior knowledge - Use what you already know in order to identify the main ideas in text
Make connections - Between ideas in text, text to the world and text to other texts
Focus - Focus on main ideas, if expositive text or, story elements if narrative text
<i>Analyse, Identify ideas, Select</i>
Analyse text - Combine personal knowledge with clues from text, find out the main points of interest
Identify - Make judgements about the text with aim to identify the main ideas in text
State the topic sentences - determine the author's purposes and conclusions
Select ideas - Combine and apply recursively the above strategies to select the main ideas in text
<i>Restructure and Note</i>
Simplify text - Underline the main idea and cross out redundant, detailed or subsidiary information.
Change the structure - Change structure of text with the aim to express ideas in your own way
Note the main ideas of the text in complete sentences, establish connections between sentences
<i>Organise, Write, Revise</i>
Combine and organise your notes into continuous writing
Revise the summary: make sure you kept the original meanings, your language is correct and your transcript is clear.
Note the author's conclusions and organise and reformulate your notes
Revise the summary - make sure you kept the original meanings, your language is correct and your transcript is clear.



- E X P L A I N -

Remember that writing a summary requires:

- The knowledge of the text**, obtained through repeated readings.
- Identification and formulation of the main ideas** using short sentences.
- Rephrasing the main ideas** into longer sentences.
- Adding some selected significant details** from the secondary ideas.
- Clearly specifying the actors** involved in the action described.
- Accurately follow the chronological sequence** of the actions reported.
- Using the present tense** and the past tense.
- Eliminating the descriptive** passages.
- Avoiding repetitions** and the use of archaism and local expressions.
- Using the second person** in the narrative.
- Switching from direct to indirect speech** without inserting dialogue.
- Using objective narration**, avoiding personal comments.
- Using transition words for an increased fluency** of the narration:
then, later, meanwhile, therefore, nevertheless, etc.
- Carefully obeying the grammatical**, orthographical and punctuation rules.
- Paying attention to the final page layout.**



4.7 (P) Practice summarisation

Exercise no 1 - Summary of a biographical text

Read carefully the following text, as it is divided into fragments. Then try to find the main topic and ideas by answering to the questions following the texts.

Johannes Gutenberg was born in the German city of Mainz, the youngest son of the upper-class merchant and his second wife, who was the daughter of a shopkeeper. It is thought that Gutenberg was a Goldsmith. However, historians know that: "Most of Gutenberg's early life is a mystery". It is presumed that, by 1411, the Gutenberg's migrated for political reasons to Strasbourg. Gutenberg is assumed to have studied at the University of Erfurt.

Around 1439, Gutenberg was involved in a financial misadventure: making polished metal mirrors to sell to pilgrims in the German town of Aachen. Due to unfortunate events, Gutenberg lost the all the money he made from producing mirrors. When the question of satisfying the investors came up, Gutenberg is said to have promised to share a "secret". It has been widely speculated that this secret may have been the idea for mechanical movable type printing. Legend says that the idea came to him "like a ray of light".

It was in Strasbourg in 1440 that Gutenberg is said to have perfected and then unveiled the secret of his invention. In 1448 back in Mainz , Gutenberg set up a printing workshop where he used his new printing techniques.. By 1455, Gutenberg completed his major project, the printing of the Bible. But in 1456, due to the debts taken for the Bible project, Gutenberg was declared bankrupt and lost his printing workshop. However, he retained a small printing shop, where he continued to print the Bible and other works. In 1465, Gutenberg's achievements were recognised and he was given the title "gentleman of the court", an honour which also included a salary. Gutenberg died in 1468 in Mainz, his contributions to society largely unknown.

Gutenberg was the first European to use the printing press and movable type. His truly epochal invention was the practical system that allowed the mass production of printed books. Although Gutenberg was financially unsuccessful in his lifetime, the printing technologies spread quickly, and news and books began to travel across Europe. In the late Medieval Europe, the arrival of movable type printing introduced Europe to the era of mass communication and facilitated scientific publishing, a major catalyst for the later scientific revolution. Regarded as one of greatest personalities in human history, Gutenberg was declared the most influential person of the second millennium, and his invention the most important of this millennium.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Gutenberg



- E X P L A I N -

Choose your answer for the following questions.

1. Which best expresses the main idea of this text?

- a) To describe how business was in Renaissance Europe.
- b) To persuade young people to read more printed books.
- c) To show the spread of printing technologies across Europe.
- d) To provide biographical information about Johannes Gutenberg.

2. Which of the following expresses the correct order of events?

- a) Gutenberg invested in mirrors, studied in Erfurt and then became a goldsmith.
- b) Gutenberg created the printing press, printed the bible, and invented the metal mirror.
- c) Gutenberg went to college, revealed his press, and then invested in polish mirrors.
- d) Gutenberg invented the printing press, printed the Bible, and the lost his workshop.

3. Which of the following is the major Gutenberg invention?

- a) The metal polished mirrors for pilgrims.
- b) The printing press with movable type.
- c) The integrated system for mass production of printed books.
- d) A written language for the scientific revolution.

4. Which of the following is best supported by evidence from the text?

- a) Gutenberg's invention was a tremendous success during his lifetime.
- b) Gutenberg's invention spread all over Europe after his death.
- c) Gutenberg's invention made him rich but did not spread very quickly.
- d) Gutenberg's invention made him incredibly rich over time.

5. Why were most people illiterate during Gutenberg's time?

- a) Young people didn't like to learn reading.
- b) The public school system had not yet existed everywhere.
- c) Writing had not yet been invented.
- d) Reading and writing were illegal for common people.

6. Which of the following titles best expresses the main idea of this text?

- a) Turn Your Good Ideas into Money.
- b) How to Make Money by Printing Books.
- c) Life and Business in Medieval Germany.
- d) Gutenberg: A Man Who Changed the World.

7. After responding to the above questions write, in your own words, a short summary for each fragment in the table next page:



- E X P L A I N -

Johannes Gutenberg was born in the German city of Mainz, the youngest son of the upper-class merchant and his second wife, who was the daughter of a shopkeeper. It is thought that Gutenberg was a Goldsmith. But historians know that: "Most of Gutenberg's early life is a mystery."

It is presumed that, by 1411, the Gutenbergs migrated for political reasons to Strasbourg. Gutenberg is assumed to have studied at the University of Erfurt.

Around 1439, Gutenberg was involved in a financial misadventure: making polished metal mirrors for sale to pilgrims in the German town of Aachen. Due to unfortunate events, Gutenberg lost the all the money he made from producing mirrors. When the question of satisfying the investors came up, Gutenberg is said to have promised to share a "secret". It has been speculated that this secret may have been the idea of mechanical movable type printing. Legend said that the idea came to him "like a ray of light".

It was in Strasbourg in 1440 that Gutenberg is said to have perfected and then unveiled the secret of his invention. In 1448 back in Mainz, Gutenberg was set up at a printing workshop where he used his new techniques of printing. By 1455, Gutenberg completed his major project, the printing of the Bible. However, in 1456, due to the debts taken for the Bible project, Gutenberg was declared bankrupt and loses his printing workshop. However, he retained a small printing shop, where he continued to print the Bible and other works. In 1465, Gutenberg's achievements were recognised and he was given the title "gentleman of the court", an honor which also includes also a salary. Gutenberg died in 1468 in Mainz, his contributions to society largely unknown.



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- E X P L A I N -

Gutenberg was the first European to use the printing press and movable type.

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Regarded as one of greatest personalities in human history, Gutenberg was declared the most influential person of the second millennium, and his invention the most important of this millennium.

Try to answer to the following questions. Use information from the text to support your responses.

1. Was Gutenberg successful in his life and work?

2. Why was Gutenberg's invention important?

3. Which invention from modern times you consider most important?



Exercise no 2 - Summary of a descriptive text

Read carefully the following text, it is divided into fragments. Then try to find the main topics and ideas by following **the categories highlighted** in the text.

Remember: your summary should not exceed the third of the original text.

The Cougar

Cougar geographical habitat:

The cougar, also commonly known as **the mountain lion, panther or puma**, is a large felid native to the Americas. An adaptable, generalist species, the cougar is found in most American habitat types.

Cougar characteristics and behaviour:

Secretive and largely solitary by nature, the cougar is properly considered both nocturnal and crepuscular, although sightings during daylight hours do occur.

Cougar hunting habits:

The cougar is an ambush predator and pursues a wide variety of prey. Primary food sources are particularly deer, but also livestock. It also hunts species as small as insects and rodents.

Cougar's habitat features

Cougar cat prefers habitats with dense underbrush and rocky areas for stalking, but can also live in open areas. The cougar is territorial and survives at low population densities. Individual territory sizes depend on terrain, and abundance of prey.

Cougar and humans

Cougar is reclusive and avoids people. Fatal attacks on humans are rare, but in North America have been increasing in recent years as people enter their territories.

Conservation status

Prolific hunting following European colonisation of the Americas and the ongoing human development of cougar habitat has caused populations to drop dramatically. In particular, the cougar was extirpated in eastern North America at the beginning of the 20th century, except for an isolated Florida subpopulation.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cougar>

The Cougar- Summary



Exercise no 3 - Quoting in a summary

1. Read carefully the text below, Aesop's fable the Lion and the Mouse.
2. Write in two sentences' a summary of the fable.

Quote some variants of the moral, as they were given by other authors.

The Lion and the Mouse by Aesop

Once when a **Lion** was asleep a little **Mouse** began running up and down him; this soon awakened the Lion, who placed his huge paw upon him, and opened his big jaws to swallow him.

- "Pardon, O King," cried the little Mouse "forgive me this time, I shall never forget it: who knows but I may be able to do you a turn one of these days?"

The Lion was so tickled at the idea of the Mouse being able to help him that he lifted up his paw and let him go. Sometime after, the Lion was caught in a trap, and the hunters who desired to carry him alive to the King, tied him to a tree while they went in search of a wagon to carry him on. Just then, the little Mouse happened to pass by, and seeing the sad plight in which the Lion found himself, went up to him and soon gnawed away the ropes that bound the King of the Beasts.

- "Was I not right?" said the little Mouse.

Moral of Aesop's Fable: Little friends may prove great friends

The Lion and the Mouse by Aesop - A summary

Quoting morals of the fable:

3. Try to find out your own version of the moral of this fable.



Exercise no 4 - Quoting in a summary

1. Read carefully the text below. It is a well-known fairytale for children, where the dramatic structure is highlighted in different colors.
2. Rewrite a shorter version of the story, not longer than the third of the original, following the idea: **"In times of need, one should rely on family members to provide shelter and help."**

The Three Little Pigs' story

Once upon a time, there were three little pigs. One pig built a house of straw while the second pig built his house with sticks. They built their houses very quickly and then sang and danced all day because they were lazy.

The third little pig worked hard all day and built his house of bricks.

A big bad wolf saw the two little pigs while they danced and played and thought, "What juicy tender meals they will make!" He chased the two pigs and they ran and hid in their houses.

The big bad wolf went to the first house and huffed and puffed and blew the house down in minutes. The frightened little pig ran to the second pig's house that was made of sticks. The big bad wolf now came to this house and huffed and puffed and blew the house down in hardly any time. Now, the two little pigs were terrified and ran to the third pig's house that was made of bricks.

The big bad wolf tried to huff and puff and blow the house down, but he could not. He kept trying for hours but the house was very strong and the little pigs were safe inside. He tried to enter through the chimney but the third little pig boiled a big pot of water and kept it below the chimney. The wolf fell into it and died.

The two little pigs now felt sorry for having been so lazy. They too built their houses with bricks and lived happily ever after.

The Three Little Pigs'- The story retold

3. Try to retell the story by following the idea: **"The need for security is an apt to respond to a threatening world"**



Exercise no 5 - Summary of a movie you liked

1. Develop a summary of a movie you like, by using the guideline questions in the table below.
2. Write your own comments or opinions on the movie you have just presented.

<u>Guiding questions to summarise a movie</u>	<u>The summary</u>
Who produced the movie and when?	
What type of film is it?	
Who plays the role of the main character?	
What story does this movie tell?	
What are the similarities with other known fictional or literary works?	
What is your comment or opinion on the movie?	



Exercise no 6 - Description of a TV show

1. Develop a short summary of this text below, by answering the following questions:
 1. What are the different types of reality shows?
 2. What are the criticisms against reality shows?
 3. What is the public for this kind of telecast?
 4. Why do young people like reality television?

Reality TV - What are they?

Reality television is a genre of television programming that documents apparently unscripted real-life situations, and features a cast of individuals who are typically not professional actors. Reality TV programs also often bring participants into situations and environments that they would otherwise never be a part of.

The genre has various standard styles, including "**confessionals**" used by cast members to express their thoughts. In **competition-based reality shows**, there are other common elements such as one participant being eliminated per episode, a panel of judges, and the concept of "immunity from elimination."

Reality television has faced significant criticism since its rise in popularity.

Much of the criticism has centered on the use of the word "reality".

Critics have argued that reality television shows do not accurately reflect reality, (i.e. participants being placed in artificial situations), or in a fraudulent manner: scenes are staged or re-staged for the cameras.

Other criticisms of reality television shows include that they are intended to humiliate or exploit participants (particularly on competition shows) or they glamorise vulgarity and materialism.

A number of studies have tried to pinpoint the appeal of reality television.

In 2006, four of the 10 most popular programs among viewers under 17 were reality shows. Studies have shown that young people imitate the behaviour displayed on these programs, learning much of their knowledge of the social world, particularly about consumer practices, from television

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reality_television

Reality TV shows - Why the public like them?



- E X P L A I N -

Exercise no 7 - An Italian writing about English theatre

Read carefully the fragment below. The text is extracted from the bestseller novel "An Instance of the Fingerpost" written by the modern journalist and writer Iain Pears.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iain_Pears or

http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/9833.Iain_Pears

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/An_Instance_of_the_Fingerpost

The novel is about a murder in 17th Century Oxford, connected by four different characters.

One of them is a young Venetian man who travelled at that time to England.

The fragment below is narrated with the voice of the young Venetian, who recounts the events that took place during his stay in Oxford.

"Going to a play in England, for any person of sensibility who has been exposed to the refinements of Italian and French theatre, is something of a shock and more than anything else reminds one how very recently this race of islanders has emerged from barbarism. It is not so much their behaviour, although the vulgar in the audience were perpetually noisy, and, it must be said, some of the better-born were far from quiet. This was due to the wild enthusiasm that the troupe of players generated. It was only a few years since such events had been allowed once more, and the joy of having some novelty to witness had sent the entire town into a frenzy. The very students, it seemed, had been selling their books and blankets to buy tickets, which were outrageously expensive.

Nor was the production so dreadful, although it was fearfully rustic, reminiscent more of Carnival burlesque than the proper theatre.

Rather, it is the type of play, which the English admire that reveals what a crude and violent people they really are. It was written by a man who had lived not far from Oxford, who, alas, had clearly neither travelled nor studied the best authors, for he had no technique, no sense of plot and certainly no decorum.

Thus, the unities which Aristotle rightly taught us ensure that a play remains coherent were jettisoned almost from the first scene. Far from taking place in one location, it began in a castle (I think), then moved to some moor, then to a battlefield or two, and ended up with the author seeing if he could place a scene in every town in the country.

He compounded his error by abandoning the unity of time between one scene and another, a minute, an hour, a month or (as far as I could see) fifteen years could pass, without the audience being informed. Also missing was the unity of subject, as the main plot was forgotten for long periods and subsidiary tales taken up, rather as though the author had taken pages from half a dozen plays, tossed them into the air, then stitched them together in whatever order they fell to earth.



- E X P L A I N -

The language was worse; some I missed as the actors had no sense of declamation, but instead talked as though they were in a room of friends or in a tavern. Of course, the true actor's way, standing still, facing the audience and seducing them with the power of beautiful rhetoric, was scarcely appropriate, as there was little beauty to deliver.

Instead, what they had on offer was language of breathtaking foulness. At one scene in particular, where the son of some nobleman pretends to be mad and frolics on an open heath in the rain, then meets the King who has also gone mad and has put flowers in his hair (believe me, I am not joking), I quite expected the ladies to be hustled out by protective husbands. Instead, they sat there with all signs of enjoyment, and the only thing that caused a frisson of shock was the presence of actresses on stage, which no one had seen before.

Finally, there was the violence. God only knows how many were killed; in my opinion, it quite explains why the English are notoriously so violent, for how could they be otherwise, when such disgusting events are presented as entertainment?

For example, a nobleman has his eyes put out, on the stage, in full view of the audience, and in a fashion, which leaves nothing to the imagination.

What possible purpose could be served by this gross and unnecessary coarseness except to insult and shock?

In fact, the only real interest in the proceedings which dragged on so long that the final scenes were played out in blessed darkness was that it presented me with a panoramic view of local society, as virtually no one was able to resist the temptation to dabble their fingers in the muck that was on offer. **"Iain Pears - "An instance of the Fingerpost"**

Write a summary of the fragment above, following the steps below:

1. Search information about the author and the novel.
2. Answer the guiding questions:
 - What is the main topic in this fragment?
 - What is the narrator talking about?
 - What is the mode of discourse: narration, exposition, description, or argumentation?
 - What are his impressions about the facts, events, situations he describes?
 - Can you find out who is the theatre author about whom the narrator is speaking?
 - And which play did the narrator describe?

The summary should be no more than 200 words.



- E X P L A I N -



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4.8 (A) Assess your learning

Reread your summaries. Try to answer the questionnaire below for the summaries you developed previously.

CHECK LIST – Asses your summary - For Vocational Schools (EQF 3/4/5)			
QUESTIONS	YES	NO	Aspects you need to change or improve, in your opinion
Did you check information about the author and the background of the text you had to summarise?			
Did you check and find the main topic in the text you wanted to summarise?			
Did you check and find the main ideas, facts, characters or action in the text you wanted to summarise?			
Did you clarify the main topic at the start of your summary?			
Is your summary structured with an introduction, a development and a conclusion?			
Does all the content of your writing keep to the basic theme of your summary?			
Is your summary logically structured?			
Is there a memorable final sentence?			
Did you verify that your presentation is fair and a correct representation of the author's ideas?			
Is it appropriate to include your personal opinion in this summary?			



- E X P L A I N -

Reread your summaries. Try to answer the questionnaire below for the summaries you developed earlier.

CHECK LIST – Asses your summary (EQF 6 - University)			
QUESTIONS	YES	NO	Aspects you need to change or improve, in your opinion
Have you considered first how to deal with the assigned text before writing your summary?			
Did you check information about the author and the background of the text?			
Does your summary offer a clear presentation of main topic in the text you were dealing with?			
Did you make this clear at the start of your summary?			
Does your summary offer a clear presentation of principal ideas in the text you were dealing with?			
Are all points in summary supported by appropriate ideas in the text?			
Does all the content of your writing keep to the basic theme of your summary?			
Have you verified the fairness and correct presentation of author ideas?			
Are all sources referenced correctly in your summary?			
If required - does the conclusion of your summary contain your personal opinion, with evidence or reasoning?			
Is the language index appropriate to the theme, the aim and the audience?			



4.9 (R) Learning resources

Here you can find links to further resources:

List of commented links	
Source	ereadingworksheets.com
Source title	Summarising Worksheets and Activities
Description	Article
Link	http://www.ereadingworksheets.com/free-reading-worksheets/reading-comprehension-worksheets/summarizing-worksheets-and-activities/
Language	English

List of commented links	
Source	West Virginia Department of education
Source title	Summarisation Techniques
Description	Resources about Summarisation Techniques
Link	https://wvde.state.wv.us/strategybank/summarization.html
Language	English



5 CREDITS

The learning resources have been developed within the Erasmus+ program “EXPLAIN” by:

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These organisations are active in the field of secondary and university education, vocational and educational training.

Author: Emilia Pecheanu (Universitatea Dunarea De Jos Din Galati - Romania)

Editing: Emma Beatty, Carol Finlay, Ayuna Murphy (FIT).