

How to Create a Summary

A summary reduces a longer piece to the main, relevant points by leaving out details. Use your own words and paraphrases; minimize quotations. A good summary is fair to its source by representing it accurately and clearly identifying where it came from. Summarize when you want to use only the main points from a long passage or a whole work, to provide background information, or give the reader context. To create a summary:

1. **List basic information** readers need to understand what the source says and where it comes from (who the author is, what kind of work it is, citation etc.)
2. **Identify the most important sentences** in the source relevant to your paper's topic
3. **Paraphrase the sentences** (put them into your own words)
4. **List the paraphrases** in their original order
5. **Re-write this list into sentences** that flow logically to integrate into your paper

Example:

This is a one paragraph summary of six pages in a chapter on drafting from a book titled *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*:

Colomb and Williams (2010) emphasize that drafting is a process of discovery that can fuel a writer's creative thinking. They acknowledge that some people have to draft carefully and stick close to their outlines, but also advise them to work freely and openly. The chapter encourages even slow, cautious drafters to be open to new ideas or surprises. Outlines should support not limit the composing process. The authors stress the value of steady work that follows a plan -- for example, writing every day rather than all at once just before a due date.