

WCOM 661

Article Summary Guidelines for Preparation

These guidelines are to help you *think about* the article you are going to summarize. Your answers to the questions listed below should not be included in the summary. You do, however, need to state the thesis or purpose of the article in the first paragraph of your summary.

- I. Choice of Article:
What kind of journal does this article come from? What kind of prestige does this journal have in your field? How “academic” is it? Why is it “academic” or not?
- II. First Reading of Article:
 - A. Read through the article once without any highlighting, underlining, or note-taking.
 - B. After this first reading, answer the following questions:
 1. What is the main idea (topic, thesis, or purpose) of this article?
 2. Are there any sub-topics or important supporting ideas?
 3. Does the introduction explain clearly what the article is going to be about? (Remember that an introduction is often not called an “introduction.”)
 4. Does the article describe a methodology that has been used?
 5. Does the conclusion (which may also be entitled something else) summarize clearly and concisely the author’s main points?
 6. If there is an abstract, does it mention everything that is essential to understanding the article? (Almost all truly academic articles will have an abstract, i.e. a short summary of all the main points; it is usually placed at the beginning of an article.)
 7. Is there a list of keywords? (This is generally a clue that an article is academic.)
 8. Is there a list of References or Works Cited at the end that includes recent articles and books? (This section may be called something else, e.g. Bibliography. It is also an indication that an article is academic.)
- III. Second Reading:
 - A. Use your answers to questions B.1 and 2 above to check whether you have understood the author’s main points. Then, briefly summarize them in writing.
 - B. Explain, again briefly, how the author develops the main points in the body (argumentation section) of the article.
 - C. Has the author left out anything?
- IV. Writing the Summary:
Having read and thought about the article, write the Article Summary using the following outline (some variations are possible):

- A. First paragraph: State the main thesis (purpose) of the article; purely informative articles are more likely to state a purpose than a thesis.
- B. Second-third paragraphs: Show how the author develops this thesis (purpose). This is where the methodology and results would be reviewed.
- C. Perhaps a fourth paragraph, a brief concluding paragraph giving an overview of the article's content. If this has been covered adequately in the preceding paragraphs, a single summary sentence will suffice. At this stage, do not pass judgement on the article; judgements belong to the subsequent stages of analysis and critique.

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