Career Skills 3
Writing a formal summary

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English for Academic Study

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Writing a formal summary

Source material

- ROBOTICS A History-Paul Bettelley (University of Plymouth) October 2000
- Available on Moodle

EfCS3 Task 1

- Summarise the given text and present it in an 'academic' style
- Assessment criteria
  - Communicative quality
  - Sense of audience and purpose
  - Grammar and vocabulary
  - Presentation
- Summarising a text – a skill involved in later tasks
- 10% of course marks

Your aim

- A text of not more than 2 pages

- 12 font, single spacing
- 300-400 words

- Deadline: 12 noon 18 October
- Upload using Moodle

What is a summary?

- Shorter

- Whole

- Neutral

- No evaluation

- *An accurate representation of the author's ideas.*

What is the purpose of summarising?

- to enable students to demonstrate their understanding of reading material

- to provide background information and context to a more critical piece of writing

What is the process?

- Skim – understand general ideas
- Select – what's important
- Structure – organise the information
- Own words – referencing/citation system
- Style – audience and context

Skim & select

Reading skills (task):

- Skim read: how is it organised? Chronologically? Thematically?

- Select important points: look for statements and evidence

- Organise make an outline: follow original organisation or make your own?

Select

- Read, mark, and annotate the original. (For a lecture, work with the notes you took.)

- highlight the topic sentence

- highlight key points/key words/phrases

- highlight the concluding sentence

- outline each paragraph in the margin

Select

- the source (author--first/last name, title, date of publication, volume number, place of publication, publisher, URL, etc.)

- the main idea of the original (paraphrased)

- the major supporting points (in outline form)

- major supporting explanations (e.g. reasons/causes or effects)

Structure

1) Have a clear overall structure

2) Organise ideas into paragraphs: not a list of headings but a 'story' with an outline of points that are linked to your purpose.

3) Use topic sentences.

4) Paragraphs to follow some sort of order: chronological account; process; cause /effect; compare/contrast; for/against.

Introduction

What is the text you are summarising?

What is it about?

'This text by ...presents...'

'The text examines the question of....'

'The author considers key events in the history...'

The aim / purpose of this essay is to provide an overview of....'

'In his essay '.....' Betteley discusses different types of robots as they have emerged over time...

'He/ the writer focuses on/ addresses key pioneers and influences in....'

Main Body

- Use **your** outline, not the original text
- Decide how many paragraphs – each should have

  A main point

      'In the early 19th Century …'

      'Following this….' 'In 1954….'

      'More recent advances …..',

      'Currently….',

  Support your points with evidence

      'Examples of x include', 'According to…'

      'Bettely cites / refers to….'

Conclusion

What is the writer's conclusion?

    Useful language

        'Bettely's conclusion is that we…'

        'The writer/ author suggests that / asks whether…'

What is your evaluation?

    Give your opinion

        'From the above…'

        'In my view / opinion ….'

        'The essay….'

        'The author…..'

Structure

- Use discourse markers that reflect the organization and controlling idea of the original, for example, cause-effect, comparison-contrast, classification, process, chronological order, persuasive argument.

- Longer summary, remind your reader that you are paraphrasing by using "reminder phrases."

Structure

- The author goes on to say that …

- The article (author) further states that …

- (Author's last name) also states/maintains/argues that …

- (Author's last name) also believes that …

- (Author's last name) concludes that…

Own Words

- Paraphrasing

- Direct Quotation

- General summary

- Numerical referencing/citation system (in-text and reference list)

Example of numerical referencing

- Searcy and Whatley[1] also found evidence for functions in Thermoplasma. They do not seem to form de novo in the cytoplasm[2,3]. This is symbiant-like behaviour, but there is no trace of a genome in microbodies[1].

Example of numerical referencing

- The reference list would give each reference in numerical order:

- SEARCY, D G. and F. R. WHATLEY. Thermoplasma acidophilum cell membrane. Zentralblatt fur Bakteriologie Mikrobiologie und Hygiene 1 Abteilung Originale, 1984, C3, 245-257.

- OPPERDOES, F. R. and P. A. M. MICHELS. Biogenesis and evolutionary origin of peroxisomes. In: J. M. Tager, Organelles in Eukaryotic Cells. New York: Plenum, 1989, pp. 5-10.

- TABEK, H. F. and B. DIESTREL. Biogenesis of peroxisomes. In: J. M. TAGER, Organelles in Eukaryotic Cells New York: Plenum, 1989, pp. 5-10

Example of numerical referencing

- When referencing more than one author the first author is listed by surname first, followed by their initials. The second author is listed by initials first, followed by surname.

Own Words - Reporting verbs

- Aims/Results and Opinion

- Strong argument

- Neutral

- Counterargument

- Suggestion

- Criticism

Own Words

argue	state	refute the claim	suggest	criticize
claim	report	argue against	recommend	
contend	explain			
maintain	discuss			
insist	illustrate			
posit	observe			

Own Words

- http://www2.le.ac.uk/library/help/referencing/vancouver-numbered-system

- Example:

- https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studyingeffectively/writing/referencing/styles.aspx

Style

- Know your audience, avoid journalistic style - expectations.

- Write clear sentences which are complete (subject and verb); not too long (25 words?); not too many ideas.

- Register and word choice

- Avoid narrative: 'Devol met a man by the name of Joe Engelberger at a cocktail party where Devol told Engelberger about his programmable manipulator.'

Summary

- Check title / author / source

- Skim

- Select

- Organise

- Own words

- Write Introduction / Body / Conclusion

- Check style and presentation (accuracy of spelling and grammar, sentence length)

Other Sources

- Use this for style:
http://www.library.dmu.ac.uk/Support/Heat/index.php?page=488

- This for paragraphs:
http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/grammar/grammar-guides/paras

- And the Vancouver referencing link for citation.