

Academic Summary

Technical Communication

Week 4

03.09.2025

An academic summary is a concise, succinct representation of an academic text such as a scholarly book, journal article, and research report.

The main purpose of summaries:

enable the reader in a limited time to determine why a paper, a journal article, a book chapter or a book is worth reading.

readers can briefly understand the contents of a journal to then become a consideration of whether it is appropriate for what the reader is looking for

researchers can state what the crux, major points of the document

A summary is a shortened or condensed version of a reading.

- Only includes the most important concepts or ideas
- Used to explain the content of the reading to someone who has not read it
- Written in your own words with a minimal use of direct quotes.

Academic summary is sometimes confused with abstract

Why?

An abstract is a brief representation of the aim, method, main results and conclusions of the study,

whereas an academic summary typically shows the (argumentation) structure of the text, i.e. the skeleton of the arguments

What do you need in a summary?

- Accuracy
 - Did you report the author's ideas accurately?
- Completeness
 - Did you include all the key points or main ideas?
- Emphasis
 - Did you replicate the importance the author placed on certain ideas?
- Readability
 - Did you write it in an easy-to-understand paragraph form?
- Your Own Words
 - Did you mostly use your own words and put all of the author's words in quotation marks?

Reading for a Summary:

To write a summary, you need to understand the reading and its main ideas.

This will include (remind yourself the three pass technique):

1. The overall main idea
2. Paraphrase it in your own words
3. Consider the sections into which the paper is divided
4. Identify the sections or divisions that the author used to organise the work
(similar to making an outline for the reading)
5. Include the author's key points.
(Take note of what the author used to support his/her statements, e.g., the most important examples, arguments, statistics, expert opinion, etc)

Create an Outline:

Writing a summary is much easier to do from an outline, which will also provide you a writing plan for your summary.

- At the top of the outline, write the main idea/concept.
- Make an outline of the supporting ideas you would like to include in the summary.

The summary must be written in flowing text.

You should not take words exactly from the source text or the original text.

must also be easily understood and should not deviate in meaning from the original text

Writing an academic summary has various functions and uses for example to help students facing exams and to prepare for a discussion.

In this course, the assignment of making summaries of journal articles is to prepare for an academic work.

You are expected to be able to quickly penetrate the structure and core ideas of a paper/article and to express them concisely in the your own words

The academic summary may serve **three functions**:

- Explaining a text: intended to explore the text types, the main themes, and the theoretical frameworks; focuses on the general content (annotated bibliography).
- Replacing a text: extracts the most important (sub)themes of a text based on a well-considered selection (extract, exam preparation, reading report)
- Discussing a text: a critical report with a substantiated final conclusion (review, essay, final paper, preparation for a group discussion)

Three Tips for Writing a Summary:

- In the first sentence, identify the author, the title of the work, and the thesis statement.
- Write in paragraph form with clear transitions between major points.
- You might choose to organise the ideas in the same order as the original.

What to Avoid when Writing a Summary:

- Repetition of similar ideas.
- Minor details (e.g., examples, anecdotes, descriptions, statistics, and dialogue).
- Direct quotes (unless there is no other way to give the information).
- Digressions from the main points.
- Your own personal opinions or comments on the subject are not welcome.

The format of an academic summary is nearly always the same. A summary of a research report in the form of journal article must contain information on the components mentioned in the table below.

Research question/problem statement

A well-written summary will reveal research questions or problems in the topic that the author will clearly explain, answer, or argue in the text.

What issues are being studied?

What kind of problems does the author really want to address?

On the basis of which specific case did the author do that?

Method

In this section, you will explain how the investigation has been carried out.

Only state the outlines; there is no need to explain in full detail.

Deliver a concise description of how the investigation has been generated, analysed and interpreted by means of a scientifically proven method.

Keep to the most important aspects, such as the structure of the most important data and the method used in the analysis.

Results/arguments

In this section you should process the outcome of the investigation.

Do not mention all findings in the summary; narrow it down to the most important findings or arguments relevant for answering the research question or supporting the main thesis.

Any unexpected outcomes are to be mentioned as well.

Motivation/relevance

In this section of the summary you will answer the question why this investigation has been conducted.

The research question or the definition of the problem statement is connected to an issue that is of importance to the author, either in a social or academic context.

What is the author's motivation?

What gap is the research text trying to fill?

Theoretical framework

You must be careful of the framework within which the investigation has been conducted.

From which theoretical perspective has the author approached the issue?

Which scientific theories or models does the author use as starting point to describe, analyse, interpret and explain the issue?

Conclusions

The research question has to be answered in this part of the academic summary.

You are not allowed to submit any new information.

Do not include your opinion unnecessarily