

Week 8

Comm 1234

Technical Writing Fundamentals

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Plan for today

- The goals of a summary
- How to summarize
- Time given for activity

Summary Activity

- <http://www.wired.com/2014/05/the-robot-car-of-tomorrow-might-just-be-programmed-to-hit-you/>
- Due (via email) at **2:30pm tomorrow**.
- **.docx format**
- **Lastname_Firstname_summary.docx**
- Include your **word count**.
- Should be **90-110 words**. (10% deduction for going over or under, increasing in increments of 10 words)
- **Clarity, grammar, and effective selection and organization** of details.

Example

- Imagine I made you read *War & Peace* (1225 pages!) for next week's class—say there will be a test.
- What do you do?
- SparkNotes!
 - Why?
 - What type of information do you expect to find there?

The goals of a summary

- Reproduce, in a condensed form, the core **message(s)**, **argument(s)**, or **explanation(s)** of the original piece.
- Peel away all the extra details, examples, tangents, and qualifying statements.

What goes into particular types of summaries?

- **Message**

- Core statement(s)
- What should the reader know if they can't know anything else?

- **Argument**

- Core premises
- Conclusion/thesis (might be implied)

- **Explanation**

- Core causes
- Result
- Usually an answer to questions like, “Why is it that...?” or “What is...?”

In a video posted yesterday that was shown in more than 200 Catholic churches across Toronto, Archbishop Thomas Collins criticized upcoming legislation that will expand Canadians' access to physician-assisted death. He accused the government of religious discrimination, and said the proposals should "shock us to the core."

He was referring to a 70-page report tabled by a parliamentary committee on February 25th. It argued that minors and the mentally ill should not be excluded from the right to physician-assisted death, and that physicians who are personally unwilling to perform the service should be forced to refer the patient to a physician who will.

What is the core **message**?

- What should the reader know, if they can't know anything else?

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Are there any **arguments** being presented?

- Look for premises and implied conclusions
- Implied = something not said out loud, but generally understood to be true
- Does anybody (including the writer) want to persuade somebody of something?

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Are there any **explanations** being presented?

- Did the writer include anything to answer a potential question that the reader might have?

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How to summarize

- Preview the text
 - Read the title
 - Read the introduction
 - Read the headings
 - Read the conclusion
- Read the whole text
- Identify the author's purpose
 - To convey novel information?
 - To persuade the reader of something?
 - To explain a phenomenon?
 - Some combination of the above?

Hint: try reading only the first sentence of each paragraph

How to summarize

- Take your eyes away from the original text, and try to explain the core ideas out loud.
- If you can't do this, you need to reread the text until you understand it.
- Write the core message, and then add the essential information that your reader will need in order to understand it.

Tips for cutting your word count

- Look for common fluffy phrases (week 3)
- If the original writer provides multiple examples of something, express it as a general concept instead.
 - E.g. “I like bananas, apples, and oranges” could be changed to “I like fruit.”
- Take out any words whose meanings you didn’t know before reading the original text (unless you’ve explained them in your summary)

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