

SUMMARIZING

When using sources, it can be helpful to integrate an author's ideas into what you are writing. One way to do this is to summarize.

When you summarize, you highlight the main ideas and restate the general elements of an author's work into your paper without directly copying the original passage. Summarizing is useful when a writer needs to combine other ideas with their own thoughts in an essay, speech, or other type of writing.

SUMMARIZING STRATEGIES

When starting the summarizing process, it can be daunting to see the amount of information to make concise. Here are some strategies a writer can use when preparing to summarize:

- Read the passage/article multiple times and identify the most important elements/themes. Ask yourself these questions as you read: Who and what is being discussed? When did this happen? Where? Why? How?
- Rewrite the main ideas/topics of each section in your own words in one or two sentences.
Tip: Look for topic sentences and transitions statements to help you identify the main ideas/topics within each section.
- Check that you do not use the exact language of the original source in your sentence summaries.
- Ensure that your summary is shorter than the length of the original section.
- Put all the information from the sentence summaries together into one final, cohesive summary. In other words, insure the final summary keeps a similar flow of ideas as the original work.

WHAT TO AVOID WHEN SUMMARIZING

Writers often solely focus on making a source concise and may forget about important guidelines when writing a summary. Here are some things to avoid in a final summary:

- Ensure that your summary does not include your opinions or biases on the original work.
- Avoid plagiarism by using synonyms instead of exact words from the original work, formatting the summary differently from the source, and correctly citing the source.
- Avoid including extra or irrelevant ideas from the original source in your summary.
- If there are many ideas to be summarized, keep those ideas in the same order so that your summary aligns with the original work.

Handout revised for the UNLV Writing Center by Savannah Haverstick, Summer 2022

CONTACT US:

(702) 895-3908 | writingcenter@unlv.edu
unlv.edu/writing-center

