

Steps in Summarizing Informational Texts

Step 1	Seek to understand the reading and writing task. <i>What are you expected to know and do? What are you summarizing? What is the purpose of reading this text?</i>
Step 2	Carefully read the text. <i>Number the paragraphs or sections. Read the text once (clean read) to get a general idea of what the text is about. Avoid getting bogged down in all the details. Read for the big ideas and the structure. Is this a sequence of events, a cause and effect relationship, a narrative, a description, or some other purpose? When you are done reading, ask yourself, "What is this text about? What is the main idea?"</i>
Step 3	Reread and mark the text. <i>Circle the key terms and underline the information relevant to the reading and writing tasks.</i>
Step 4	Pause to connect ideas within the text. <i>Chart individual paragraphs or sections in order to gain insight into the details. What visuals (charts, diagrams, pictures, or other visuals) help to "see" what the author is saying? How does this idea connect to that idea?</i>
Step 5	Write a summary statement for each paragraph in the margin. <i>What are the ideas that support this main idea? If this is a process, are the big steps? If this is a description, what are the most important features? If this is a cause and effect relationship, what are the causes and what were the effects?</i>
Step 6	Write a final summary, utilizing what you have marked and written in the margins.

Tips for Writing Summaries of Text

- Present ideas in an order that makes sense, starting with the main idea.
- Refer to your markings on the text when writing the summary.
- Use accurate verbs to describe the information. Active verbs are preferred over passive verbs
- Include important vocabulary, using what you circled and the class discussion as a guide for the key words.
- Use your own words in paraphrasing the information. Do not quote directly from the text, unless you are doing it on purpose. If quoting directly, use quotation marks.
- Limit the length of your summary to one-fourth to one-third the original length of the text.
- Reread your summary for clarity and accuracy.