



Writing a précis or summary of a text: video tutorial

<http://www.screencast.com/t/02khT1iGr>

Transcript

Introduction: Welcome to this tutorial on writing a précis or summary, from the University of Reading's Study Advice team. This tutorial is designed for you to go through at your own pace, and you can pause it at any time.

What is a précis?: When you summarise a set of ideas from a text without analysing them, it is called a précis or summary. A précis should preserve the key aspects of a text in a short fluent piece of writing.

You will find précis especially useful when taking notes or researching for a literature survey, or an article summary assignment. It can help you to turn this... into this.

To write a précis or summary:

To write a précis, follow these steps:

1. Read through the text you are going to précis, making brief notes only to remind yourself of key points. If there is an abstract, read this first to get an overview.
2. Then think about these questions. You might want to write a sentence in response to each to help you get an overview of the key points:
 - What was the topic of the text?
 - What was the purpose of the text?
 - What were the main areas discussed?
 - What methods were used in the research?
 - What insights or results were achieved?
 - What conclusions were reached?

Writing a précis of a short text: Here is a worked example of how you might write a précis of a short piece of text.

- Start by reading the text all the way through, and think about the questions listed in the previous slide to get a general overview of what is being said.
- Now write one or two sentences for each paragraph.
- Add a brief introduction and a conclusion if it's appropriate.
- Now read through these sentences and edit your work to make a fluent piece of writing.
- Practise these steps and you will soon be used to producing useful summaries of your reading.

Summary: So to summarise, here are the things you need to think about when writing a précis. A précis summarises the main points of a text without analysing them. You need to read through the whole text to get a general overview, before you start writing. Make a note of the key points, and then join them together to make a fluent narrative.

If you practise these, you are sure to achieve précis success!