

The Writing Center

DLA: Analysis vs. Summary



This DLA is a writable PDF form. You can enter your answers directly into this document.

YOU MUST DOWNLOAD AND SAVE THIS FILE TO YOUR COMPUTER.

Do not complete this form in a web browser. You will not be able to save your work.

Student Name:

Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE** DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

DLA Video Review

If you would like to watch that goes over the process of [Analysis vs. Summary](#), please use the QR code:



SCAN ME

Introduction

In school and in many other areas of daily life, students are often expected to analyze parts of the world surrounding them. This means that they may be asked to analyze a situation and/or its outcome, a claim, a literary work, among many other things. Very frequently, though, students have difficulty knowing the difference between analysis and summarization, and they end up writing essays that contain a whole lot of summarizations and little to no analysis. This DLA is intended to address this problem by clarifying the characteristics of summaries vs. analyses.

What is summarization?

A summary is a shortened, rephrased version of original source material. It provides readers with an overall understanding of the original work through a shortened version that includes just the main ideas of a passage, book, movie, etc. In short, a summary informs readers by answering more factual-type questions (such as **who/what/when/where**) about the original piece.

What a summary does

- Briefly restates information from the source by presenting only main points or key ideas
- Maintains a neutral/objective tone
- Normally uses third-person point of view (e.g., the author, they, he, she, researchers...)

What a summary doesn't do

- Doesn't include your opinion or evaluation

For further practice on summarization, see our "Summary Skills for Academic Writing" DLA.

What is analysis?

An analysis is a careful in-depth examination of a specific work, topic, or quote, among others. In general, an analysis asks that you break something into parts in order to study it. An analysis of a film, for instance, might look at the use of color or camerawork to understand the film's meaning. An analysis of an essay might look at word choice or the examples used by the author. An analysis of fiction might look at how the story uses symbols or character descriptions to create meaning.

In short, an analysis requires you to “read between the lines”/make inferences, think of how ideas relate to each other, consider the meaning and or effects of elements in the work. After carefully examining the work, you then write your thoughts or claims about the work and support them. An analysis differs from a summary in that the analysis presents your own original claims about the work you are examining. Analyses normally answer more critical questions such as **why? how? so what?**

What an analysis does

- Looks for deeper meaning (For example, you might discuss the author’s choice of words and explain how that choice changes or affects his/her text and what influence it has on readers.)
- Offers supported opinion and/or judgment (In other words, when you make an analytical claim, you offer details/descriptions/examples/explanations to “prove” it to the reader.)
- Examines assumptions (For instance, when writing about an author’s argument, you can make claims about the unstated beliefs upon which he/she has built his/her argument and decide whether such assumptions are faulty/illogical or not. For example, if an author argues that students’ grades improved after the school agreed to build a playground, you can discuss his or her [likely faulty] assumption that there are no other reasons that might have influenced the increase in student grades—if that is your goal.)

What an analysis doesn’t do

- Doesn’t just rephrase or describe information that has already been presented or that was stated by someone else (i.e., should not just summarize)
- Doesn’t just offer superficial interpretation of previously presented information (i.e., doesn’t just discuss what you feel it means)
- Doesn’t state an unsupported opinion (In other words, it doesn’t state an opinion you have without evidence from the reading to “prove” it.)

Examples

Take a look at the pairs of sentences below and notice the differences between summary and analysis in each pair.

- ☆ **Summary:** The movie *Crazy Rich Asians* tells the story of two young lovers, Rachel Chu and Nick Young..
- ⊗ **Analysis:** The director of *Crazy Rich Asians* uses the film to introduce diversity and culture into Hollywood media.
- ☆ **Summary:** In this English class, students learn how to annotate texts, write academic essays, and think critically.
- ⊗ **Analysis:** This English class leads students to become more effective learners and improves individuals by teaching them crucial tools for critical reading, writing, and thinking.
- ☆ **Summary:** In his book, he discusses current societal issues and the effects of individual biases.
- ⊗ **Analysis:** His book reveals his deep concern with current societal issues, and it does an excellent job of leading the audience to question its individual biases.
- ☆ **Summary:** Walt Disney’s *Big Hero 6* tells the story of Hiro and his robot friend, Baymax.
- ⊗ **Analysis:** Walt Disney’s *Big Hero 6* highlights the importance of compassion and defines true love as something more than romantic love.

As the above examples show, summary statements tend to be more “factual” in that they simply state what took place in the original work. On the other hand, analytical statements present the students’ original claims.

Does a paper ever include both summary and analysis?

Absolutely!

Sometimes, a brief summary can be used at the beginning of a paper to establish context that will allow the reader to better understand your analysis. Such a summary, if it is brief, can work in an introduction or as an opening body paragraph. If the summary is in a body paragraph, you can begin the paragraph with a more “factual” topic sentence like “Cao’s novel has an eventful plot.”

Other times, while writing your analysis, you might present factual details that we associate with summaries within a paragraph in order to support your claims. Just make sure you don’t slip entirely into summary.

More Examples

Now take a look at the sample paragraphs below to see how summary and analysis can work in context.

A sample SUMMARY of Walt Disney’s Coco

Factual topic sentence (introducing a summary)	<p>Disney’s animated film, Coco, describes the magical journey of a 12-year-old boy named Miguel as he ventures through The Land of the Dead in order to help his deceased musician great-great-grandfather return to his family and reverse the family’s ban on music. Young Miguel dreams of being a famous musician, but his family has a firm ban on music. Because his great-great-grandfather left his wife, Imelda, and daughter, Coco, and never came back, his great-great grandmother banished music from the family before starting her shoemaking business. Everyone in Miguel’s family is a shoemaker, and they have been for generations; however, Miguel wants to become a musician like Ernesto de la Cruz, a popular actor and singer of Coco’s generation. On the Day of the Dead, Miguel accidentally damages a photo on the family’s ofrenda and discovers that his great-great-grandfather is holding Ernesto’s famous guitar. Miguel then concludes that Ernesto is his great-great-grandfather and ignores his family’s ban and enters into a talent show for the Day of the Dead. Miguel breaks into Ernesto’s mausoleum and takes Ernesto’s guitar to use in the show. Once Miguel starts playing, he becomes invisible and is only able to interact with and be seen by his skeletal dead relatives who are visiting from the Land of the Dead. His skeletal family are unable to visit the family in the Land of the Living since Miguel removed Imelda’s photo from the ofrenda. Miguel learns that he must go back to the Land of Living so that Imelda can visit and to prevent himself from turning into one of the dead. He must receive a family’s blessing to return, but Imelda will only give the blessing if Miguel swears to never play music again. Miguel refuses and decides to find Ernesto and receive his blessing instead. Miguel then meets charming trickster, Hector, who claims he knows Ernesto and can help Miguel meet him if Miguel promises to take his photo back so that he can visit his daughter before she forgets him. Eventually, Miguel and Hector meet Ernesto; Miguel discovers Ernesto’s and Hector’s dark and complicated history and learns that Ernesto stole Hector’s songs and poisoned Hector. Ernesto takes Hector’s photo; Miguel and Hector are thrown into a pit where Miguel realizes that Hector is his great-great-grandfather. The two escape the pit, expose Ernesto for the fraud that he is, but fail to retrieve Hector’s photo. Miguel gets Imelda’s blessing and returns back to the Land of the Living. Though Hector’s photo was lost, Miguel sings “Remember Me,” a song Hector sang to Coco as child, and helps Coco remember her father, which reunites Hector and Imelda with Coco.</p>
Details/ summary of the story (NO analysis)	

Notice how the above paragraph (including its topic sentence) focuses on simply restating facts about the story (i.e., summarizing). One sign that the above paragraph is a summary is the frequent use of chronological transitions—words that signal time: on the day, then, once, eventually. If you find yourself writing a paragraph with multiple words like these, you are probably summarizing as opposed to analyzing.

Now take a look at the analytical paragraph below and notice the characteristics of an analysis.

A sample ANALYSIS of Walt Disney's adaptation of Coco

<p>Student's topic sentence (overall analytical claim/examination)</p> <p>The body of the paragraph mixes details/ summaries of the scene (in normal font) and the student's analytical supporting points (in <i>italics</i>).</p>	<p>Disney's animated film, Coco, highlights the significance of identity and rebelling against outdated traditions and values. Although the movie initially opens with Miguel's resistance to his family's traditions and values, the film ultimately argues the importance of embracing one's own identity. At first, Miguel is depicted as an outsider to his family because he does not want to pursue in the family's shoemaking business and must hide his true passion of playing music from everyone else. His desire to become a musician is so strong that he goes against his family's wishes and enters a talent show. Though his rebellion causes tension between him and his living and deceased family, it was necessary since Miguel's pursuit to follow his true self and journey through the Land of the Dead leads to the discovery of his family's history, brings him closer to his roots, and even resolves past family trauma that caused generations of resentment and guilt. Miguel also rebels against his great-great-grandmother's blessing to go back to the Land of the Living only if he gives up his music and pursues his aspirations instead of accepting the family's wishes. He decides to go back to the Land of the Living his way by receiving the blessing of de la Cruz, his assumed great-great-grandfather. Without this second act of rebellion, Miguel's complicated family history might never have been settled. Because Miguel pursues his dreams instead of following his family's, the film argues that staying true to one's passions and dreams can bring growth to the individual and their loved ones. Furthermore, once Miguel learns that Hector is his real great-great-grandfather and that he was poisoned by de la Cruz, he tells Imelda of this, which leads to her absolving Hector of his past and leads to Imelda accepting Miguel's love for music. Imelda takes back her previous stipulation and accepts Miguel for who he is. This final act of acceptance, especially from the original relative who initiated the ban on music, demonstrates that individuality and acceptance of others can help families move forward and find closure and forgiveness of the past.</p>
--	--

- As demonstrated in the above example, summary and analysis are intertwined within the paragraph, but the summary serves mainly to provide reference and support for the analysis as opposed to making a claim in and of itself.
- The analysis “frames” the above paragraph; in other words, the paragraph begins with an overall analytical claim, which helps the writer decide which details/summary to include in the paragraph to support the analytical claim(s). (Summarization in the above paragraph involves factual details from the story.)
- It's important to note that the analytical topic sentence makes an overall claim as opposed to just presenting a fact or a summary.
- Notice that the analytical closing sentence (or conclusion) in the above paragraph revisits the overall idea of the paragraph (which is also introduced in the topic sentence).

For information on how to integrate summaries in your writing, see our “Integrating Sources” DLA.

Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

1. Review Analysis vs. Summary

Using **your own words**, answer the following questions.

What is a summary?

What is an analysis?

□ 2. Identify Effective and Ineffective Analytical Paragraphs

Read the paragraphs below. Consider the topic sentence (is it analytical or not?) and the body of the paragraph (does it present analysis or does it focus on summarization?). Use these questions to support explanation on whether the paragraph is analytically strong or weak and explain why.

The following paragraphs use information and quotes from the online article, [“The Sneaky Ways Social Media Can Sabotage Your Body Image and 3 Easy Tips to Help You Break the Cycle”](#) by Erin Heger.

Paragraph 1

According to Erin Heger, using social media often leads to many negative effects. For example, constant comparisons from looking at other accounts can lead to eating disorders, negative dynamics with food and weight, and obsessiveness with one's body image. Photoshopping pictures before posting also contributes to a negative self-image. In the article, the author mentions, “According to a 2022 review, research found that taking and editing selfies was more harmful than posting them, perhaps because it allows you to focus on — and try to fix — your flaws.” People on social media also tend to compare themselves to images of fitness people and models, which has resulted in higher risks of eating disorders. There are ways to combat the negative effects of social media. Heger suggests the following tips: taking a break from social media, unfollowing people that create a negative self-image, and finding a group that helps create a positive mindset. Using social media can cause problems, but there are solutions someone can do to create a more positive perception.

What makes the analysis strong or weak?

Why?

Paragraph 2

Because social media usage leads to negative mental and health effects, users should set more limits on their usage and focus on more positive activities. In the article, “The Sneaky Ways Social Media Can Sabotage Your Body Image and 3 Easy Tips to Help You Break the Cycle,” Erin Heger states, “With an estimated 3.6 billion users worldwide, social media is a large part of today's culture. But consistently scrolling through posts — particularly images that evoke negative feelings or elevate a certain body type — can impact how you see yourself.” An astounding number of people use social media every day; however, because users interact with each other via social media frequently, this has greatly impacted one's perception of one's self. Instead of using social media as a source of communication, users are heavily influenced by observing other's edited and filtered posts. The more users focus on the ‘perfections’ of their friends and of social media influencers, the less they think of themselves, which increases the likelihood of developing eating disorders or going on restrictive diets to replicate what they see on social media (Heger). The best way to combat such drastic side effects is to reduce one's daily intake of social media and exchange that time with activities that help boost one's self-esteem. For example, taking a short break can significantly improve one's mental health and well-being (qtd. in Heger). A simple break can reduce the side effects since one will not consistently focus on comparing themselves to others. A healthier relationship with social media that includes time limits and a shifting of free time to unplugged activities can help people to achieve a healthier mind and body.

What makes the analysis strong or weak?

Why?

3. Identify Summary and Create Analytical Paragraphs

Read the paragraph below and **revise** to create an **analytical paragraph**.

The following paragraph uses information and quotes from the online article: [“‘A Complete Erasure’: Asian, Pacific Islanders Face Stunning Lack of Representation In Hollywood”](#) by David Oliver.

Despite the recent inclusion of AAPI in recent films, Hollywood still has very little Asian representation on-screen. Even though there have been hit movies such as Parasite and Crazy Rich Asians within recent years, on-screen appearances of Asian actors are almost non-existent. David Oliver states, “Research from the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative found just 44 films featured an Asian or Pacific Islander lead or co-lead, 14 of which were Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson. Only six of those leads or co-leads were female – and none of those were women 40 years old and up. None were members of the LGBTQ community, either.” This research shows that Asian American actors still do not get roles or leading roles in films, especially females and people in the LQBTQ community. This is a problem because there is not much representation for Asian Americans in Hollywood as the evidence clearly shows. More Asian Americans should be cast in films to increase representation and understanding of Asian culture.

Write your revision here:

□ 4. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you’ve learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the “appointment summary report” through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under “appointment summary reports” (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is “completed” or “not completed.” If it is marked as “not completed,” book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at writingcenter@mtsac.edu or (909) 274-5325.

If you are an individual with a disability and need a greater level of accessibility for any document in The Writing Center or on The Writing Center’s website, please contact the Mt. SAC Accessible Resource Centers for Students, access@mtsac.edu, (909) 274-4290.

Revised October 2025