

## Summary Skills for Academic Writing

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Course: \_\_\_\_\_

### About This DLA

#### ***Important Note***

All the activities (4) in the DLA must be completed in their entirety before meeting with a tutor and receiving credit. Where indicated, complete your work on this sheet. If your instructor wants evidence of this completed DLA, return this form to him or her with the tutor's signature included.

#### ***Learning Outcomes***

Through computer exercises and other independent activities, this activity explains what a summary is and will help you practice and develop summarization writing skills for academic writing.

#### ***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.

### What Is a Summary?

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
  - doesn't include minor details

## Different Types of Summaries

- **A summary can be as short as a sentence or a few sentences long**, depending on the purpose for writing the summary.

Example:

The movie *Titanic* tells the story of the accident involving the ship, and it also tells the story of the love between Jack and Rose.

- **A summary can be one paragraph or longer.** (Refer to your professor's instructions to determine how long your summary should be.)

Example:

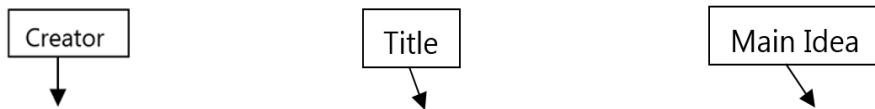
Walt Disney's adaptation of *Cinderella* tells the story of a beautiful young girl who is good and kind, and despite being treated cruelly by her stepmother and two ugly stepsisters, she eventually finds happiness. She spends her days doing chores, and she tries to do her best. The animals love her, especially two mice named Gus and Jaq. One day the king sends out an invitation to all the young women of the kingdom to attend a ball for his son, the prince, hoping to find him a wife. Cinderella hopes to go to the ball, but her stepmother gives her a long list of chores to do. She does her chores then finds that her animal friends have made a beautiful gown out of a simple dress of her mother's. When her mean stepsisters see her in the gown, they rip off the beads and ribbons and leave Cinderella in tatters. They go to the ball, and she is left crying in the garden. Suddenly, a fairy godmother appears to Cinderella. She makes a beautiful coach out of a pumpkin and turns the mice into horses and coachmen. She also waves her wand and puts Cinderella into a fabulous gown with glass slippers. She sends her to the ball with a warning to return by midnight when the spell will be reversed. Cinderella meets Prince Charming at the ball, and he is spellbound by her beauty and grace. Hearing the clock begin to strike midnight, Cinderella runs from the prince, leaving a glass slipper behind. The next day the prince sends the grand duke throughout the kingdom with the glass slipper to find the beautiful young woman. When he arrives at Cinderella's home, her stepmother has locked her in the attic; however, her mice friends free her. Her stepmother trips the duke when he tries to put the shoe on Cinderella, causing the shoe to shatter. Cinderella produces the other shoe from her pocket and it fits perfectly. Shortly afterwards, Prince Charming and Cinderella are married and live happily ever after.

As the above examples show, summaries tend to be more "factual" in that they simply state what took place in the original work, without your opinion, judgment, examination, or any type of analysis.

## The Parts of a Summary Paragraph

If your professor has asked you to write a one-paragraph summary, your paragraph should have a topic sentence and supporting sentences. (*Unless, of course, you are supposed to write a summary in an introductory paragraph of an essay. Then your instructor will likely provide you with specific instructions.*)

- **Topic sentence:** The topic sentence of a summary should include the title, author/creator, and main idea or purpose of the original source you are summarizing. Sometimes your instructor might also ask you to include the date of publication.



Walt Disney's adaptation of *Cinderella* **tells the story of a beautiful young girl who is good and kind, and despite being treated cruelly by her stepmother and two ugly stepsisters, she eventually finds happiness.**

- **Supporting sentences:** The supporting sentences are the key points/main ideas from the original source. It helps to use transition words or devices so that the connection between ideas is clear, and so that it is also clear when you are moving from one key idea to the next.

Look back at the above summary of Walt Disney's adaptation of *Cinderella*. The supporting sentences begin with the second sentence and end one sentence before the last.

- Notice how only the most important ideas are included, and how minor details are left out.
- Notice the transitions used in this summary: One day, suddenly, when..., shortly afterwards. (For other types of transitions, please refer to our ***Transitions and Words that Show Logical Relationships*** handout.)

## A Note on Summary & Response, Analytical, and Research Assignments

- Sometimes your instructor might ask you to write a summary paragraph of a piece and your response to the piece. You should always follow your professor's specific instructions for the assignment, but remember not to include your comments on summary-only sections of your paper.
- If you are writing an analytical paper, you will combine summary and analysis. (Refer to the ***Summary versus Analysis DLA*** for further information on analytical writing.)
- If you are writing a research paper, you are likely going to use summaries in various parts of your paper. (Refer to our ***Integrating Sources DLA*** or handout for further information on using summaries in research papers.)

## Tips on Writing Summaries

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/SummaryDLA> and read through the "[Summary Writing](#)" presentation to learn about strategies for identifying main ideas and writing good summaries.

## Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

### 1. Review Summary Writing

Answer the following questions about the summary presentation you have just viewed on the above link.

a) What question can you ask yourself if you are having trouble finding the main idea?

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b) What question can you ask yourself if you are having trouble finding the supporting ideas?

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c) What else can you do to better understand the original material before writing your summary?

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### 2. Online Quiz

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/SummarySkillsDLA> and take the [Summary Skills DLA Quiz](#). You must score at least 80% on the exercises before seeing a tutor. After you complete the task, **PLEASE ASK A LAB TUTOR TO PRINT THE PAGE THAT HAS YOUR SCORE. DO NOT EXIT THE PROGRAM UNTIL THE TUTOR HAS PRINTED THIS PAGE (FREE OF CHARGE)**. If you have any other questions, do not hesitate to ask a lab tutor.

### 3. Write a One-Sentence Summary

Read through the paragraph below, underlining the topic sentence and any supporting points. Finally, write a brief scratch outline and a one-sentence summary of the paragraph.

Learning Styles: What Are They and Why Should I Know Them?

There are many different types of learning styles, and being aware of one's own learning styles can increase chances of success in school. One common learning style, for instance, is called *visual*, which is the style of those who tend to learn faster through images, pictures, and spatial understanding.

For example, when learning the parts of an essay, a visual learner can benefit from seeing a model essay that has each of its parts labeled or color-coded. Another learning style is the *auditory* style. People with a predominantly auditory style may learn something new just by listening to a lecture since they learn better through sounds and music. *Kinesthetic* learners, on the other hand, prefer to move around and experiment with what they are learning; for instance, instead of simply listening to instructions, they may need to grab the mouse and click around when trying to learn to do something on the computer. These are just a few of the many known learning styles, and people have a mixture of them. It is also helpful to keep in mind that a person's predominant learning style may vary according to what they are learning. In other words, a student who prefers visuals when learning about history might, at the same time, revert to a kinesthetic style when learning math. Moreover, a learner might utilize more than one learning style depending on the topic being learned. Once a student becomes aware of his or her preferred learning styles for different concepts and whether these predominant styles are effective or not for learning such concepts, the student can make adjustments and increase his or her ability to internalize something new.

**Scratch Outline**

Topic sentence (main point):

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Supporting points (key ideas only):

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**Summary (one sentence)**

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#### □ 4. Write a Summary Paragraph

Go to <http://www.mtsac.edu/writingcenter/> for the [Writing Center website](#). Click on the DLA tab and find Summary Skills for Academic Writing. To the right, under Supplementary Links, read the article [“Six Tips for a Healthy Spring Break”](#).

Then summarize this page-long article in a paragraph. Remember to write a **topic sentence** (containing the title, author, and main idea) and **supporting sentences** (with only key points).

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#### □ 5. Review the DLA

Go to <https://mtsac2.mywconline.com> and use the [Mt. SAC Writing Center Appointment System](#) to make a DLA appointment at, or sign-up to see a tutor on the **“DLA Walk-in”** list in the Writing Center. During your session with a tutor, explain your understanding of a summary. Explain to the tutor strategies that you used to summarize the articles in this DLA.

Student’s signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Tutor’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*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](mailto:access@mtsac.edu), (909) 274-4290.*

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