

How to Summarise?

In addition to quoting and paraphrasing, there is summarising which involves writing a shortened version of your lengthy source. When using this technique, you need to identify the most important elements of the passage you read that you consider relevant to the main topic you are writing about. Like paraphrasing, when summarising, you should be careful not to change the initial meaning, not to delete important ideas, and not to use similar sentence structures as those of the original author(s) (Bailey, 2011). Moreover, you should not use quotation marks or page numbers, and you should include only the name (s) of the author (s) and year of publication (WHO, 2010; Markowski, 2019; Bak, 2003). As you can see, paraphrasing and summarising have a lot in common; however, bear in mind that they also have their fair share of differences.

Difference between Paraphrasing and Summarising:

Bowker (2007) explains that paraphrasing is more detailed than summarising since you have to keep all the ideas mentioned by the author(s), without changing their order. Moreover, you have the freedom to add some words such as synonyms or transition words that were not mentioned initially. On the contrary, summarising is more general and flexible since you do not have to respect the same order of ideas mentioned by the author(s). You can delete what you consider unnecessary to mention in your essay and keep only what is important.

Let us suppose you were making research on social media and you have come across the following passage that has been written by Manning in 2014 on page 1158. If you were to summarise this paragraph, what would you do?

Practice:

1. Summarise the following text written by Patten (2017):

Research methods are the building blocks of the scientific enterprise. They are the “how” for building systematic knowledge. Let’s take a moment to think about knowledge. How do you “know” things? One way you know a thing is through your own personal experience. Even as personal experiences are rich in depth and detail, and create a lot of meaning in life, they are also quite limited in scope. If you try to generalize what is true for you, it is easy to overgeneralize and arrive at a misleading conclusion for everyone. Another fundamental way to gain knowledge is through the authority of others-your parents, teachers, books you have read, shows you have watched, news and articles from social media. This “second-hand” knowledge includes many diverse sources, and often this knowledge is more than one step removed from where it was generated.