



How to write a summary?

When you work with written or spoken texts, you are often asked to summarise the text or certain aspects of it. To do this, you need a proper overview of the text, its content and its message. Then you have to decide what to include in your summary and what to leave out. The following steps and rules can guide you.

The Planning Stage

- Step 1** Listen to or read the text carefully. Either make notes or mark the most important words and phrases. Find out which text type you are dealing with.
- Step 2** Listen to or read the text again and try to answer the '5 Ws' (Who? What? Where? When? Why? Perhaps also What is the consequence?). To get a better understanding of the text, you may also want to use the reading strategies (skimming and scanning).
- Step 3** Decide which passages of the text contain essential information that needs to be part of your summary and which passages can be left out. Take your time to check which parts of the text contain examples, numbers, comparisons, quotes, imagery, direct speech, etc. - these parts do *not* belong in a summary.

<i>What?</i>	<p style="text-align: center;">The comeback of the written word <i>Gideon Spanier</i></p>
<i>What?</i>	<p>Texting, emails, tweets and other forms of text-based communications on a mobile device are now more popular than making phone calls or talking face to face.</p>
<i>Who?/Where?</i>	<p>The average Briton sends 50 mobile text messages a week, double the number four years ago, which will confound those who thought the SMS was a dying technology.</p>
<i>(comment)</i>	<p>Social media and email are also taking up more of our time – an average of 90 minutes a week (although that might seem impossibly low to some smartphone addicts).</p>
<i>What?</i> <i>(examples/numbers)</i>	<p>Among the 16- to 24-year-olds, 96% use some form of text-based communication each day to keep in touch with friends and family, 90% send texts and 73% use social media but only 67% make voice calls.</p>
<i>What? When?</i>	<p>Indeed, the overall amount of time that Britons spent making voice calls on both mobile and landlines fell for the first time last year, sliding 1%.</p>
<i>Who?</i> <i>(repetition)</i>	<p>These are just some of the surprising findings from media regulator Ofcom's Communications Market Report, an authoritative annual guide that was published today.</p> <p>Watching video and playing games were meant to have taken over our life in the digital age but it turns out that words still matter.</p> <p>If anything, the power of text has increased, which should give hope to anyone who cares about reading – or believes in the future of journalism.</p>
<i>Why?</i>	<p>New technology lets us communicate in a pithy and highly effective way in real time, hence the popularity of the text message, the tweet and the live blog. At the same time, digital now allows us easy access to the biggest [collections] of documents and books [...]</p>
<i>What?</i>	<p>From: 'The joy of text – it's words that matter in mobile age', <i>London Evening Standard</i>, 18 July 2012</p>



The Writing Stage

Step 4 Write your summary in your own words.

1. Write an introductory phrase, mentioning the essential aspects, such as the title, 'author, topic, main message and source of the text.

LANGUAGE HELP

The story/text is about ...
 The text deals with ...
 In the text the reader gets to know ...
 The topic of the text is ...
 The article shows ...

The text 'The comeback of the written word', written by Gideon Spanier and published in the 'London Evening Standard' on 18 July 2012, deals with the rise of text-based digital communication.

2. Use the *present tense*. **Don't copy the original text** - use your own words.

In his article, Spanier illustrates the continued importance of the written word in digital media and points out that text-based communication has become more common than talking to people on the phone or in real life.

Spanier quotes the Ofcom's Communications Market Report recently published in Britain, which shows that the majority of Britons use...

So although people had feared that the written word would go out of fashion...

3. Round off your text by restating the main message or action.

All in all, the text focuses on... and points the reader's attention to the fact that...

- ### Step 5 Check your summary. Does it contain the most important facts and ideas from the original text? Have you left out examples, unnecessary details, etc.? Have you checked the spelling, punctuation, tenses, etc.?

Include	Do NOT include
<p>A. an introductory sentence / introductory sentences with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the overall idea/topic of the text – the genre – the headline/title of the text – the author's name – the year/date of publication – name of the newspaper/magazine (if given) <p>e.g. In the short story ... [title] published in ... [newspaper/magazine] on... [date/year], ...[author's name] deals with ... [topic]. The article ... [title] by ... [author's name] published in ... [newspaper/magazine] on ... [date/year] is about ... [topic]</p> <p>B. main part with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the essential aspects of the text in a logical order e.g. The author shows/explains ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – pronoun "I" – any personal opinion – comments – quotations – direct speech – minor points – examples – statistics – unnecessary explanations



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