

# A FRESH LOOK AT SUMMARY WRITING

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**ABSTRACT:** This current manuscript, a Fresh Look at Summary Writing, is deemed novel in the domain of academic writing. It in particular has been written for international school, college and university students who either challenge with writing or wish to (re)learn writing through short and easy ways. This work in general targets the English language seekers as well. The current work differs at least from some other writing books as enclosed in the bibliography. It holds a diverse perspective (if not better). It is featured with briefness, clarity, and simplicity. It in simple English trains students on how to develop academic paragraphs. It is an instructional endeavor to concentrate on the academic aspect of writing which as such deals with the way an acceptable paragraph comes to life. In effect, students might gain the benefits of being able to (i) communicate with their supervisors; faculty or university authorities persuasively, (ii) complete some sections of their journal papers, course assignments, academic projects, proposals, and research studies reasonably, and (iii) prepare for the next stage smoothly which is the essay writing.

**Key words:** communication note, paragraph, writing, students, academic

## HOW THIS MANUSCRIPT WORKS

This short manuscript is composed of five sections that include view, grammar stop, review, bibliography, and appendix. View offers the main idea of the note and helps readers grasp some theoretical and practical points. Next, the grammar stop is a spot where grammar points are explained using examples. The review section then wraps the communication note by recapping its important points and central message. Bibliography enlists the cited sources of the note and lastly, the language learners could get down to exercises at the appendixes left at the end of the work.

## VIEW

A summary is a reproduced copy of a paragraph in which fewer words are used. A summary should mean the same as the original text from which it has been adopted. In writing a summary, one ought to pay attention not to stay off the original text. Hence a summary should:

- be approximately one-third of the original text.
- Be objective.
- maintain the (same) main idea.
- cite the source of the text.
- mention the title of the original text, its author, and its main idea preferably in its first line.

In order to write a summary, one should follow the three steps below:

- to skim : reading the text quickly to grasp the main idea
- to chart : filling the above identified ideas in a grid/table like the one on the next page
- to expand : developing the charted points/ideas into full sentences on your own

As mentioned above, a summary grid or chart helps you organize the information taken from the original passage. To practice, read the following excerpt of an article about time management.

Time management is an important skill that all students should develop. Daily and weekly timetables are two excellent ways to plan a study program. Students can use them to manage their studies and set themselves study goals. A great amount of time can then be set aside for activities such as sports and other social commitments. Apart from that, proper time management help students to prioritize. By doing this, they will be able to concentrate on more urgent tasks first, before moving on to the next. Moreover, if time has been allocated for specific purposes, it is easier to cope with unforeseen circumstances such as emergencies, visitors, and invitations.

Nandan, T., Crucial management (2003)

Below here, a summary grid/chart has been developed on the above passage.

Main Idea	Supporting Details
Time management is essential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It allows students to manage their studies and social affairs.</li> <li>➤ It enables them to give priorities.</li> <li>➤ It helps to cope with unforeseen situations.</li> </ul>

Once such a chart like the above one, is prepared, writing a summary just requires stating the identified main idea as well as expanding the supporting points to form a

paragraph. It should be noted that a summary ought to begin with source citation. To better understand, the above original text has been summarized below:

According to Nandan (2003), effective time management causes students to organize their time to complete their study requirements. It also allows them to cope with their tasks and assignments and lastly, proper time management assists students to effectively handle unexpected situations.

You can also diversify the above beginning phrase. You can change the beginning phrase; i.e. ‘According to Nandan (2003)’ into one of the following:

- Based on Nandan (2003), effective ....
- Nandan (2003) states that effective ....
- As Nandan (2003) maintains, effective ....

In case, you are dealing with developing the literature review of your thesis or proposal, it would be possible to identify the author’s name at the very beginning and the article’s publication date at the very end or both enclosed within parentheses at the closing of the summary. Also make sure to include the source you have used in your end-of-text citation or bibliography. These strategies help to create variation and prevent monotony throughout your literature review.

Look at the two versions of the above summary in the following boxes.

According to Nandan, effective time management causes students to organize their time to complete their study requirements. It also allows them to cope with their tasks and assignments and lastly, proper time management assists students to effectively handle unexpected situations (2003).

Effective time management causes students to organize their time to complete their study requirements. It also allows them to cope with their tasks and assignments and lastly, proper time management assists students to effectively handle unexpected situations (Nandan, 2003).

**GRAMMAR STOP**

**Colons**

In previous chapter, semicolon was taught and in this chapter colon. These two writing symbols are almost alike in appearance yet different in the functions each performs. In general, colons are used to introduce items. The detail of the rules and examples of how to use colons are provided as follows:

**Rule 1**

Use the colon after a complete sentence to introduce a list of items when introductory words such as ‘namely’, ‘for example’, or ‘that is’ do not appear.

**Examples:**

- You may be required to bring many items: sleeping bags, pans, and warm clothing.
- I want the following items: butter, sugar, and flour.
- I want an assistant who can do the following: (1) input data, (2) write reports, and (3) complete tax forms.

**Rule 2**

A colon should not precede a list unless it follows a complete sentence; however, the colon is a style choice that some publications allow.

**Examples:**

- If a waitress wants to make a good impression on her customers and boss, she should (a) dress appropriately, (b) calculate the bill carefully, and (c) be courteous to customers.
- There are three ways a waitress can make a good impression on her boss and her customers:
  - (a) Dress appropriately.
  - (b) Calculate the bill carefully.
  - (c) Be courteous to customers.
- I want an assistant who can (1) input data, (2) write reports, and (3) complete tax forms.

**Rule 3**

Capitalization and punctuation are optional when using single words or phrases in bulleted form. If each bullet or numbered point is a complete sentence, capitalize the first word and end each sentence with proper ending punctuation. The rule of thumb is to be consistent.

**Examples:**

- I want an assistant who can do the following:
  - (a) input data,
  - (b) write reports, and
  - (c) complete tax forms.
- The following are requested:
  - (a) Wool sweaters for possible cold weather.
  - (b) Wet suits for snorkeling.
  - (c) Introductions to the local dignitaries.

**OR**

- The following are requested:
  - (a) wool sweaters for possible cold weather
  - (b) wet suits for snorkeling
  - (c) introductions to the local dignitaries

**NOTE:** With lists, you may use periods after numbers and letters instead of parentheses.

- These are some of the pool rules:
  1. Do not run.
  2. If you see unsafe behavior, report it to the

lifeguard.  
3. Have fun!

**Rule 4**

Use a colon instead of a semicolon between two sentences when the second sentence explains or illustrates the first sentence and no coordinating conjunction is being used to connect the sentences. If only one sentence follows the colon, do not capitalize the first word of the new sentence. If two or more sentences follow the colon, capitalize the first word of each sentence following.

**Examples:**

- I enjoy reading: novels by Kurt Vonnegut are among my favorites.
- Garlic is used in Italian cooking: It greatly enhances the flavor of pasta dishes. It also enhances the flavor of eggplant.

**Rule 5**

Use the colon to introduce a direct quotation that is more than three lines in length. In this situation, leave a blank line above and below the quoted material. Use single space for the long quotation. Some style manuals say to indent one-half inch on both the left and right margins; others say to indent only on the left margin. Quotation marks are not used.

**Example:**

The author of *Touched*, Jane Straus, wrote in the first chapter:

Georgia went back to her bed and stared at the intricate patterns of burned moth wings in the translucent glass of the overhead light. Her father was in “hyper mode” again where nothing could calm him down.

He’d been talking nonstop for a week about remodeling projects, following her around the house as she tried to escape his chatter. He was just about to crash, she knew.

**Rule 6**

Use the colon to follow the salutation of a business letter even when addressing someone by his/her first name. Never use a semicolon after a salutation. A comma is used after the salutation for personal correspondence.

**Example:**

- Dear Ms. Rodriguez:

**REVIEW**

A summary is useful in our everyday lives; we might summarize lecture notes, literature reviews, or the materials we need to be tested on. A summary is usually characterized by shortness, freedom of piracy, source acknowledgement, and retention of main idea. An able summarizer should pay enough attention to the three steps of summarization: skimming, charting, and expanding. This book, unlike some other academic writing books that speak of five to six steps, has simplified the summarization task into three tangibly easy stages as mentioned earlier this paragraph.

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**APPENDIX I**

Below is a formal letter to a bank explaining an error. You try to summarize the points put forward by the writer in form of a paragraph in the space provided.

Dear Sir,  
 I am writing in reply to a letter I received from you a few days ago. In your letter you state that I am \$240 overdrawn and that you will be charging me \$70.

I would like to point out that the reason I am overdrawn is because of a mistake made by your bank. If you look through your records you will see that I wrote several weeks ago explaining the situation. For the last twelve months, I have been paying \$300 a month for a car I bought last summer. The monthly payments were taken directly from my bank account. However, two months ago I sold the car and I wrote to you instructing you to stop paying the monthly instalments. I received a letter from you acknowledging my request, but, for some reason, nothing was done about it. Another \$300 instalment has been paid this month and this is the reason why I am overdrawn.

I would like you to contact the garage where I bought the car explaining your error. I would also like you to ask them to return the money.

Yours faithfully,  
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**APPENDIX II**

Read the following excerpt adopted from a scientific source, then make your summary chart or grid and expand it to write a summary.

Youths today are used to having information passed to them on a silver platter. Not many youths like to read any more because it involves too much work. My peers hate to read, not only because there are words involved in that activity, but also because it is difficult for them to visualize the word presented in the book. It is also impossible for them to focus on a book because they have short attention spans. Television, on the other hand, presents to them a different world every thirty minutes, which holds their attention. This leaves them with no mental work to do, except to decide which channel they would like to watch.

Akmar Saad, The Reading Dilemma (2008)

Main Idea	Supporting Points
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 1. _____</li> <li>➤ 2. _____</li> <li>➤ 3. _____</li> </ul>

The box below is the place where you may write your summary out of the above boxed text. Once more, it should be reminded to (a) credit the author and the publication date, (b) write approximately as short as one third of the original text, (c) not indent your summary as it is almost the case, and (d) claim the ownership of the summary by writing it on your own; i.e. try to change the words, structure, etc. of the original passage.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Hassan Fartousi, an academician and researcher, is working at the faculty of Language and Education of the Geomatika College International. As well as Malaysia, he holds 16 years of experience in the English language teaching in the UAE and Iran. Hassan has published and presented tens of papers in Semantics, writing skill, English Language Teaching (ELT), and Rhetoric. Holding a Master’s of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) from the IIU, a public university in Malaysia, he has decided to create an instructional note different (if not better) with the intent of streamlining as well as facilitating the academic skill of writing.