

Precise Writing

In common language precise writing is known as summarizing. A précis is the gist or main theme of a passage expressed in few words. But in spite of its brevity it should be lucid and full so that the reader may be able to grasp the main points and general aspect of the passage summarized. A précis is meant to express only the main theme, shorn of all unimportant details and explanations. Although no specific rules can be laid down for the length of a précis owing to different styles of writers but in general a précis should not contain more than a third of the number of words in the original passage.

- [How to write good Précis?](#)
 - [Reading](#)
 - [Writing](#)
 - [Rough Drafts](#)
 - [The Art of Compression](#)
 - [Revision of the Draft](#)
 - [Quick Tips](#)

How to write good Précis

Writing précis is not an easy task, it means an intensive brain work. There is no short cut to summarizing a passage. For writing a good précis one should be prepared for high level of concentration, deep attention and extensive retention of the context in his brain. With all these traits one has to follow the steps given ahead:-

1. Reading.

1. First step towards good précis writing is to read the given passage thoroughly and quite carefully at an appropriate pace to get general idea of its meaning. If one reading is not enough to understand then read it again and yet again till it become familiar to you, the more familiar it will be to you, more clearer it's **subject** and **what is said about that subject** will be. To make it easy to comprehend one can repeatedly ask below given questions to him while going through the passage i.e.
 - What is it I am reading?
 - What does the writer means in the passage?
 - What is the subject in the passage?
 - What is the author saying in the passage?

These questions can work as catalysts in your mind to look for the central idea of the passage

1. At this stage a suitable title, which is usually asked to supply, can be looked for. It can be some word, phrase or short sentence from the passage that will sum up briefly the main subject of the passage. Sometimes this is provided by some key sentence in the passage. These kinds of key sentences may be found at the beginning or at the end of the passage. But this will not always be the case. In the absence of key sentence one can get clear idea of the subject from the passage itself and then sum it up in a suitable title.
2. After getting suitable title further reading of the passage is required to understand the details of the passage along with the main purpose. Read it now sentence by sentence in fact word by

word to clear the meaning. Thorough study of this kind is necessary, as a phrase, a sentence, or even a single word can be of prime importance to understand the point clearly.

3. By now one should be in a position to finalize as to which part of the passage is essential and which are comparatively unimportant and can be ignored without any substantial loss. This process of selection is considered as the toughest part of précis writing and need a lot of practice. The best guide for the selection is of course the subject or main theme of the passage. A clear and correct idea of that can help of distinguish between important and unimportant part of the passage. At this stage it is prudent to note down the conclusion in brief notes i.e. the subject, the title and the details which one consider essential or important for final précis writing.

2. Writing

This is the second step of the process of writing a good précis and it starts with a draft of what you have to finalize at the later stage.

(a) Rough Drafts

Make sure the limits within which the given text is to be compressed. If the number of words is given you then it is a bit easy but if you are told to reduce the passage to say, a third of its original length then you have to, count the no. of words in the given passage and divide them by three. One note able here is that You can use fewer words than the number prescribed, but in no case may you exceed the limit. Writing a draft and that too in prescribed limits in first attempt is not an easy task. A good deal of patience and revision will be required before you get it right. During writing this draft few points that has to be kept in mind are

- The précis should be in your own words. It must not be made up of phrases and sentences quoted from the original text.
- The précis must be well connected. It may be divided into different sections or paragraphs, according to changes in the subject-matter, but these must not appear as separate notes.
- The précis must be complete and self contained from all aspects; that is, it must convey its message fully and clearly without requiring any reference to the original text to complete its meaning.
- 4. Précis is essentially the gist of the passage which you have to express. There is no room in a précis for any kind of redundancies of expression must be rigorously pruned.
- The précis must be in simple, direct grammatical and idiomatic English.

(b) The Art of Compression

During précis writing the writer is not necessarily bound to follow the original order of thought to the passage to be summarized, if writer can express its meaning more clearly and concisely by transposing any of its parts keeping some basic points in mind.

- Correct sequence of tenses after the “verb of saying” in the past tense.
- Clear differentiation of the various persons mentioned in the passage. Care must be taken with pronoun confusion proper names should be used occasionally.
- Correct use of adverbs and other words indicating time
- Great care must be taken to avoid lapsing in to direct speech- a very common fault. Some passages, however, are best summarized in direct speech.

Revision of the draft

Now carefully revise it before you write the fair copy making it sure that its length is within the prescribed limits. This is the time to write out the fair copy neatly, prefixing the title you have chosen.

In Nut Shell

- Carefully read the passage several times to apprehend clearly its main theme or general meaning.
- Examine the passage in detail, to make sure of the meaning of each sentence, phrase and word.
- Supply a short title which will express the subject.
- Select and note down the important points essential to the expression of the main theme.
- Note the length of the number of words prescribed for the précis, and write out a first draft.
- In doing this remember that you are to express the gist of the passage in your own words, and not in quotations from the passage; that you should condense by remodeling than by mere omission; and that your précis must be self contained and a connected whole. Add nothing; make no comment; correct no facts.
- Revise your draft. Compare it carefully with the original to see that you have included all the important points. If it is too long, still further compress it by omitting unnecessary words and phrases or by remodeling sentences. Correct all mistakes in spelling, grammar and idiom and see that it is properly punctuated. Let the language be simple and direct.
- Write out neatly the fair copy under the heading you have selected.