



Writing an article summary.

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Aims of the Session....

- ▶ To discuss what is an article summary
- ▶ To provide generic guidelines for an article summary
- ▶ To consider what your summary should include
- ▶ To consider the 5 step process of writing an article summary
- ▶ To consider critical thinking / writing.

Article Summary.

- ▶ The goal of an article summary is to compose a concise and objective overview of the original article.
- ▶ The summary should focus on the article's main ideas and important details that support those ideas.

What is an Article Summary.

- ▶ A summary is a short objective overview of the main ideas of a larger work. It includes only the broader points or purpose of a work rather than the details or smaller plot points. You can think of a summary as how you might boil down the main points of a book or film to describe it to other people.
- ▶ Often, a summary is a paragraph in length, but it can span several paragraphs for longer works. Always follow the guidelines of the assignment or project, including citing the original source.

Guidelines for an Article Summary.

- ▶ State the main ideas.
- ▶ Identify the most important details that support the main ideas.
- ▶ **Summarise in your own words.**
- ▶ Do not copy phrases or sentences unless they are being used as direct quotations.
- ▶ Express the underlying meaning of the article.
- ▶ For Psychology understanding of the article is essential, providing a critical evaluation of the article is also important.
- ▶ Adhere to the word count guidelines.

Your summary should include:

- ▶ Introduction (Do not use a subheading).
- ▶ Give an overview of the article, including the title and the name of the author/s.
- ▶ Provide a statement that states the main idea of the article – What is the article about and what the article covers (briefly) – SIGNPOST.

Main Body of Article.

- ▶ Use the body paragraphs to explain finer details of the article and what it is covering.
- ▶ The number of paragraphs will depend on the length of the original article and also the wordcount.
- ▶ One-paragraph summary - one sentence per supporting detail, providing 1-2 examples for each.
- ▶ Multi-paragraph summary - one paragraph per supporting detail, providing 2-3 examples for each.
- ▶ Use transitional words and phrases to connect ideas.

Conclusion.

- ▶ You should conclude your summary with an overall summing up and stating the underlying meaning of the article.

Article Summary Checklist.

- ▶ Include an opening line listing the author's name, title of the work, and a broad overview of the work, such as the genre or overall idea of the work.
- ▶ A summary should include all of the main points or ideas in the work but avoid smaller details or ideas. You don't want to provide every aspect of the plot or smaller points in your summary.
- ▶ Your summary should be written using your own words.
- ▶ Present the main ideas objectively, avoiding your own opinion and thoughts about the work.
- ▶ Avoid including direct quotes from the work within your summary. Rather, present the main points in your own words.
- ▶ Close your summary by restating an overview of the work in one sentence.

When to write a summary

- ▶ There are many situations in which you might have to summarise an article or other source:
 - ▶ As a stand-alone assignment to show you've understood the material
 - ▶ To keep notes that will help you remember what you've read
 - ▶ To give an overview of other researchers' work in a literature review

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- ▶ When you're writing an academic text like an essay or article summary, you'll integrate sources in a variety of ways. You might use a brief quote to support your point, or paraphrase a few sentences or paragraphs.
 - ▶ But it's often appropriate to summarise a whole article or chapter if it is especially relevant to your own research, or to provide an overview of a source before you analyse or critique it.
 - ▶ In any case, the goal of summarising is to give your reader a clear understanding of the original source. Follow the five steps outlined below to write a good summary.

Step 1: Read the text

- ▶ You should read the article more than once to make sure you've thoroughly understood it. It's often effective to read in three stages:
 - ▶ 1. Scan the article quickly to get a sense of its topic and overall shape.
 - ▶ 2. Read the article carefully, highlighting important points and taking notes as you read.
 - ▶ 3. Skim the article again to confirm you've understood the key points, and reread any particularly important or difficult passages.

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- ▶ There are some tricks you can use to identify the key points as you read:
 - ▶ Start by reading the abstract. This already contains the author's own summary of their work, and it tells you what to expect from the article.
 - ▶ Pay attention to headings and subheadings. These should give you a good sense of what each part is about.
 - ▶ Read the introduction and the conclusion together and compare them: What did the author set out to do, and what was the outcome?

Step 2: Break the text down into sections

- ▶ To make the text more manageable and understand its sub-points, break it down into smaller sections.
- ▶ If the text is a scientific paper that follows a standard empirical structure, it is probably already organised into clearly marked sections, usually including an introduction, methods, results, and discussion.
- ▶ Other types of articles may not be explicitly divided into sections. But most articles and essays will be structured around a series of sub-points or themes.

Step 3: Identify the key points in each section

- ▶ Now it's time go through each section and pick out its most important points. What does your reader need to know to understand the overall argument or conclusion of the article?
- ▶ Keep in mind that a summary does not involve paraphrasing every single paragraph of the article. Your goal is to extract the essential points, leaving out anything that can be considered background information or supplementary detail.
- ▶ In a scientific article, there are some easy questions you can ask to identify the key points in each part.

Key points to a scientific article – based on empirical research.

▶ Introduction

- ▶ What research question or problem was addressed?
- ▶ Are any hypotheses formulated?

▶ Methods

- ▶ What type of research was done?
- ▶ How were data collected and analysed?

▶ Results

- ▶ What were the most important findings?
- ▶ Were the hypotheses supported?

▶ Discussion.

- ▶ What is the overall answer to the research question?
- ▶ How does the author explain these results?
- ▶ What are the implications of the results?
- ▶ Are there any important limitations?
- ▶ Are there any key recommendations?

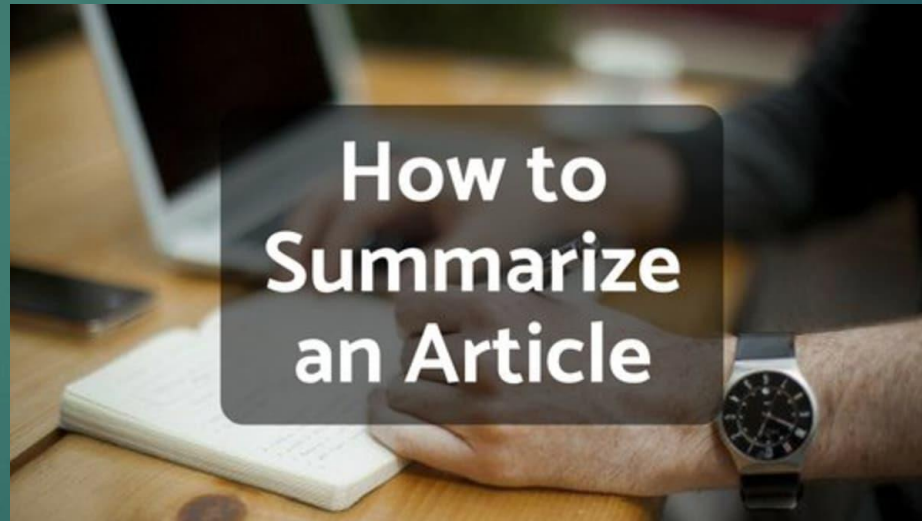
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- ▶ If the article takes a different form, you might have to think more carefully about what points are most important for the reader to understand its argument.
 - ▶ In that case, pay particular attention to the central claim that the author wants us to accept, which usually appears in the introduction—and the topic sentences that signal the main idea of each paragraph.

Step 4: Write the summary

- ▶ Now that you know the key points that the article aims to communicate, you need to put them in your own words.
- ▶ To avoid plagiarism and show you've understood the article, it's essential to properly paraphrase the author's ideas. Do not copy and paste parts of the article, not even just a sentence or two.
- ▶ The best way to do this is to put the article aside and write out your own understanding of the author's key points.

Step 5: Check your summary against the article

- ▶ Finally, read through the article once more to ensure that:
 - ▶ You've accurately represented the author's work
 - ▶ You haven't missed any essential information
 - ▶ The phrasing is not too similar to any sentences in the original.



General Tips and Questions.

- ▶ Important Points to consider (in general).
- ▶ What article are you reviewing? – This might sound like common sense but the marker needs to be aware of what article you are review. So your opening slide should contain the full reference to the selected journal which it would be recommended that you vocalise.
- ▶ What is the article about? -
- ▶ What were the main aims of the paper and why?
- ▶ How did they achieve these aims, what were the findings.
- ▶ Critical Thought.

Frequently asked questions

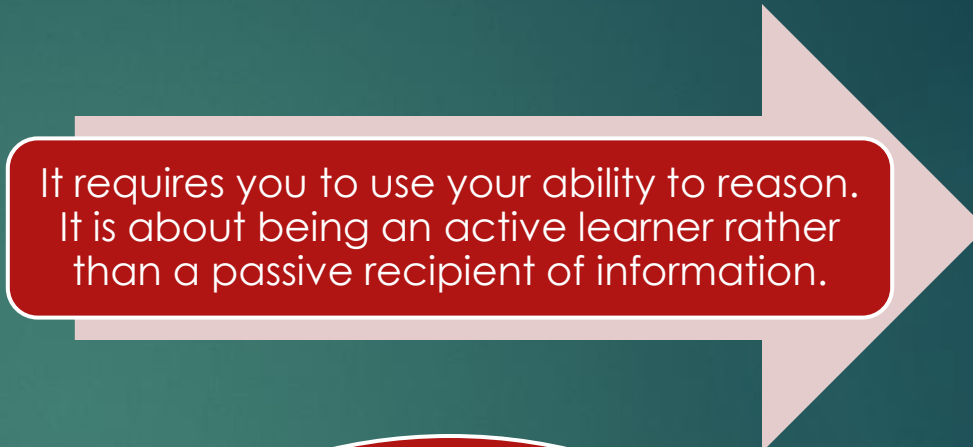
- ▶ 1) Can I look at other studies/papers to help my summary?
 - ▶ Absolutely, this should be encouraged – if you can find something to back up your point of view then it demonstrates additional reading AND a logical viewpoint considered by researchers
- ▶ 2) When you say look at the “bigger picture” what do you mean (in the case of articles based on empirical research)?
 - ▶ Noting the general limitations of the techniques is fine, but of course these researchers are accustomed with other research tools – so maybe think Why they didn't chose other methods?

Critical Thinking

What is Critical Thinking?

■ Critical thinking is...

- the ability to think clearly and rationally, understanding the logical connection between ideas.
- the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking.



It requires you to use your ability to reason.
It is about being an active learner rather than a passive recipient of information.



Critical thinkers
rigorously question ideas
and assumptions rather
than accepting them at
face value.

The Skills We Need for Critical Thinking

observation, analysis, interpretation, reflection, evaluation, inference, explanation, problem solving, and decision making.

Think about a topic or issue in an objective and critical way.

Identify the different arguments there are in relation to a particular issue.

Evaluate a point of view to determine how strong or valid it is.

Recognise any weaknesses or negative points that there are in the evidence or argument.

Notice what implications there might be behind a statement or argument.

Provide structured reasoning and support for an argument that we wish to make.



Think of something that someone has recently told you. Then ask yourself the following questions:

Who said it?

- ▶ *Someone you know? Someone in a position of authority or power? Does it matter who told you this?*

What did they say?

- ▶ *Did they give facts or opinions? Did they provide all the facts? Did they leave anything out?*

Where did they say it?

- ▶ *Was it in public or in private? Did other people have a chance to respond and provide an alternative account?*

Think of something that someone has recently told you. Then ask yourself the following questions:

When did they say it?

- ▶ *Was it before, during or after an important event? Is timing important?*

Why did they say it?

- ▶ *Did they explain the reasoning behind their opinion? Were they trying to make someone look good or bad?*

How did they say it?

- ▶ *Were they happy or sad, angry or indifferent? Did they write it or say it? Could you understand what was said?*

How does Thinking Critically Apply to Writing.

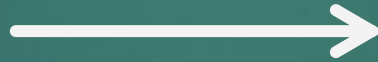
- ▶ Use this critical thought to enhance your writing through critical writing.
- ▶ At level 4 most question titles asked you to “describe” or “discuss” on a certain topic area. Now (level 5 and 6) the expectation will be for you to critically evaluate or critically discuss.
- ▶ Therefore if you “describe” or “discuss” then, in essence you are only partially answering the question.

Expectations for Psychology students.

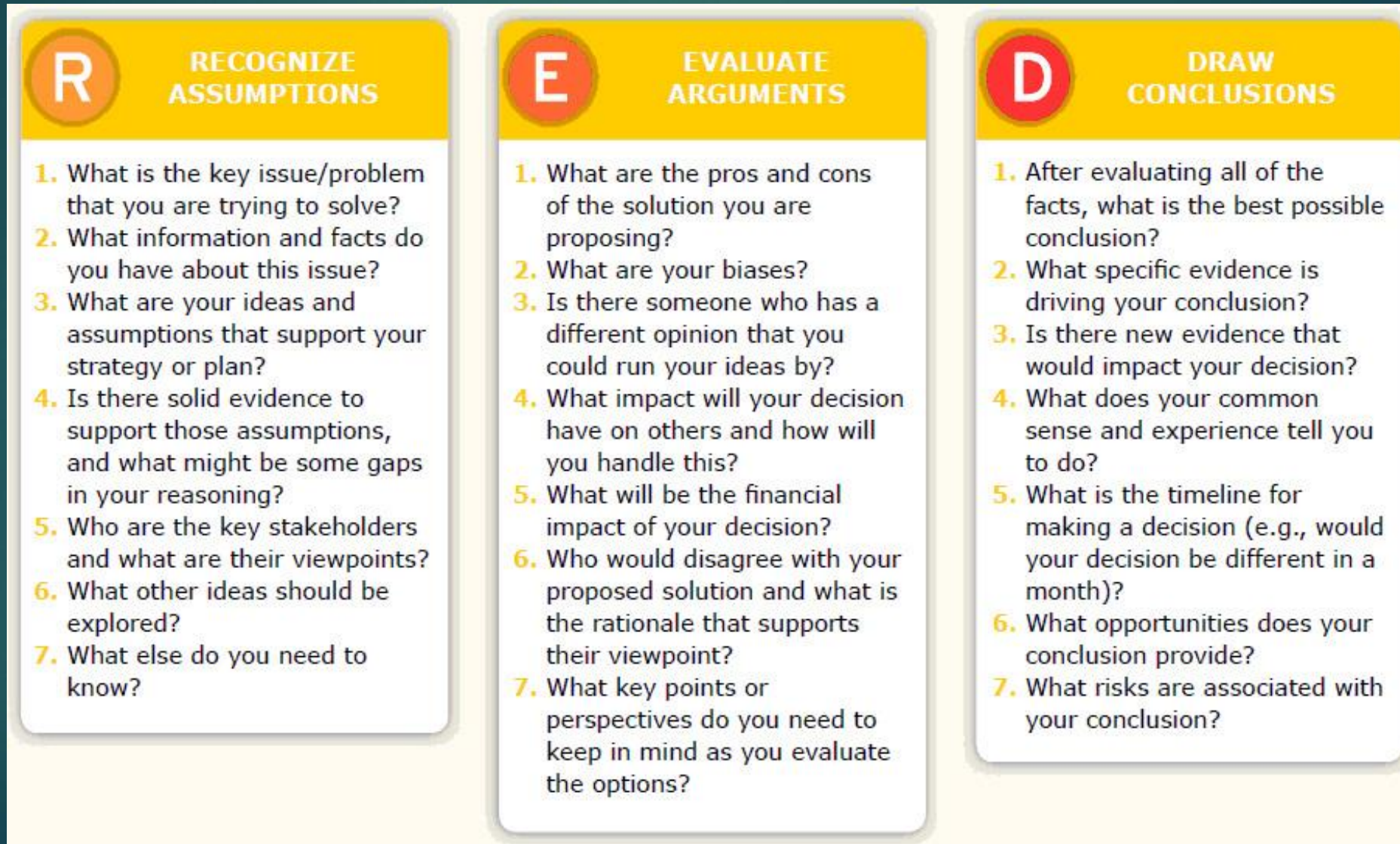
- ▶ **Do not just be a photocopier.**
- ▶ Read, Read, Read.
- ▶ Critique, Critique, Critique.

So... how can you start to write critically?

- ▶ Read the article over several times: it will not always make sense the first time!
- ▶ Get a feel for the content overall and then start breaking down each section.
- ▶ A simple model



A more complex model:



So..... When we ask you to Critically Discuss / Critically Evaluate

- ▶ It is using this critical thinking and is a vital skill for a Psychology student
 - ▶ E.g. Not just 'slating' an article
 - ▶ Highlight the positive too
 - ▶ Present negative points in a constructive and professional way
 - ▶ Imagine you're reviewing papers for a journal – a paper has faults which you need to point out, but you also need to say *how* it could be better...
 - ▶ You have to leave the author with the will to carry on!!
 - ▶ Also remember that if the paper is published in a peer reviewed experts' have agreed that the paper is good enough to be published. It doesn't mean it's perfect necessarily but does mean that it isn't hopeless!!
 - ▶ But also, some journals are better than others and more reputable ones have higher standards.

Other Things to Consider when Critically Writing

- ▶ Assume Nothing.
 - ▶ Write for an “intelligent idiot” – so YES, some description will be necessary.
- ▶ Write in your own words – so you understand it.
- ▶ Evaluate – Strengths and Limitations – Good points and points that could have been improved.
- ▶ Use other sources to support your evaluation.
 - ▶ For example – One limitation of Heaney’s (2011) research was the relatively low sample size of 11 participants, in an earlier study Walker (2009) had a sample size of 35 participants.
 - ▶ EVIDENCE OF WIDER READING.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

- ▶ Also consider the date of the theory / publication. For example, it's all very well using modern neuroimaging techniques to question (or critique) cognitive psychology theory – but let's not forget such techniques were around.
- ▶ In addition, most researchers will be aware of limitations of their study, but try and consider “why” there are limitations before just labelling them as limitations

Finally.

Everyone can be critical! Being critical involves the ability to question - to ask 'why'. Children ask this all the time and so does everyone else.

Without our ability to criticise existing ideas and ways of doing things nothing would have ever changed! So, the first thing you need to know is that you can do it, in fact you are already doing 'it' and that it is good to be critical.

Therefore, be confident in your own interpretation.