

# Summarizing

## What Is a Summary?

A **summary** is a restatement of a source in one's own words. Summaries vary in scope. Some are about the big ideas of an entire text, while others may simply describe what a section, paragraph, or sentence says, rephrased in the writer's own words.

Summaries require careful reading and comprehension of a text. They require the writer to synthesize this knowledge and ultimately produce a faithful representation of an idea or moment from the source.

## When Should We Summarize?

1. When briefly referencing a text to make a larger point.
2. When giving a broad overview of an argument or narrative.
3. When highlighting specific information and disregarding other details that may distract or detract from our own purposes.

### Summarizing: Dos and Don'ts

- **Do:** Use your own words. Avoid closely co-opting the syntax, construction, and/or vocabulary of the original text.
  - **Don't:** Heavily quote from the article; otherwise you aren't showing that you read and understood the text enough to articulate it in your own words
- **Do:** Summarize texts that are broadly relevant to your argument, point, analysis, etc.
  - **Don't:** \*just\* summarize texts that are centrally relevant to your work. Ideally, if a text is very important to the work you are doing, then you should be summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting it at different points throughout your text

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Source: *Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers* by Paul Eschholz, Alfred Rosa, and Virginia Clark, pg. 47