**How to summarize**

**Say the same thing in fewer words**

1. A summary is a shorter version of a longer piece of writing. The summary captures all the most important parts of the original, but expresses them in a [much] shorter space.

2. Summarizing exercises are usually set to test your understanding of the original, and your ability to re-state its main purpose.

3. Summarizing is also a useful skill when gathering information or doing research.

4. The summary should be expressed – as far as possible – in your own words. It’s not enough to merely copy out parts of the original.

5. The question will usually set a maximum number of words. If not, aim for something like one tenth of the original. [A summary, which was half the length of the original, would not be a summary.]

6. Read the original quickly, and try to understand its main subject or purpose.

7. Then you will need to read it again to understand it in more detail.

8. Underline or make a marginal note of the main issues. Use a highlighter if this helps.

9. Look up any words or concepts you don’t know, so that you understand the author’s sentences and how they relate to each other.

10. Work through the text to identify its main sections or arguments. These might be expressed as paragraphs or web pages.

11. Remember that the purpose [and definition] of a paragraph is that it deals with one issue or topic.

12. Draw up a list of the topics – or make a diagram. [A simple picture of boxes or a spider diagram can often be helpful.]

13. Write a one or two-sentence account of each section you identify. Focus your attention on the main point. Leave out any illustrative examples.

14. Write a sentence, which states the central idea of the original text.

15. Use this as the [starting point](http://amazon.co.uk/gp/product/031091891X?ie=UTF8&tag=mantexinformatio&link_code=em1&camp=2502&creative=11114&creativeASIN=031091891X&adid=7b475bb0-b831-47b7-8aab-101129e8a161) for writing a paragraph, which combines all the points you have made.

16. The final summary should concisely and accurately capture the central meaning of the original.

17. Remember that it must be in your own words. By writing in this way, you help to re-create the meaning of the original in a way, which makes sense for you.

**Example**

|  |
| --- |
| **Original text**  ‘At a typical football match we are likely to see players committing deliberate fouls, often behind the referee’s back. They might try to take a throw-in or a free kick from an incorrect but more advantageous positions in defiance of the clearly stated rules of the game. They sometimes challenge the rulings of the referee or linesmen in an offensive way which often deserves exemplary punishment or even sending off. No wonder spectators fight amongst themselves, damage stadiums, or take the law into their own hands by invading the pitch in the hope of affecting the outcome of the match.’ [100 words] |
| **Summary**  Unsportsmanlike behavior by footballers may cause hooliganism among spectators. [9 words] |