
UNIT 23 WRITING SUMMARIES AND NOTES

Structure

- 23.0 Objectives
- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Paraphrase, Précis and Summary
- 23.3 Writing Summaries
 - 23.3.1 The Art of Condensation
 - 23.3.2 Identifying the Topic Sentence
 - 23.3.3 Identifying the Key Ideas
 - 23.3.4 Identifying the Main Claim and Supporting Details
 - 23.3.5 Making Inferences
- 23.4 Note Making and Note Taking
- 23.5 Summarizing Speech and Conversations
- 23.6 Summaries for Research Purposes
 - 23.6.1 Plagiarism
 - 23.6.2 Avoiding Plagiarism
- 23.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 23.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

23.0 OBJECTIVES

In Block 4, we discussed features of report writing and memorandums. In order to write good memos, what a writer needs is the ability to express the most important facts or ideas about something in a short and clear form. In this unit, we will help you with two very important skills: note making (or taking) and summarizing.

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Of all the writing we have discussed so far, note making and summary writing may well be the one you are most expected to do in your academic life as a student and as a researcher. It is also a basic skill in reporting events for a newspaper. Space is limited in a newspaper and an editor may ask you to limit your write-up to a specified number of words, or to a specific number of 'inches' of a column in a newspaper.

In fact, we are summarizing information all the time. We watch a movie and tell our friends the story in two minutes, we listen to long conversations and say, "So what you are actually saying is..." Think of a long newspaper report running into three columns, but with a neat five-word headline which summarizes the entire report. Summaries may involve one or two key words, a line, or may be quite elaborate. It all depends on the purpose for writing them.

Why do we summarize what we read? Most often we summarize what others have said. We use this material for future reference. It forms an essential part of our preparation for an exam, a class discussion, a presentation, writing of projects,

research papers and term papers. In the first part of this unit we will look at ways in which we condense information in a long text. In the second part we will pay more attention to writing that involves the use of sources.

23.2 PARAPHRASE, PRÉCIS AND SUMMARY

As students, you are expected to read and remember large amounts of prose. In many of your college courses, you are probably able to memorize facts and key statements with relative ease, but at times you are expected to go a step further, i.e., read critically and closely so as to present the argument or information of an article in as cogent a form as possible and in your own words. In order to demonstrate that you have *understood* the main idea of a text you must be able to *paraphrase*, *summarize*, and even compose a *précis* of the text. Let us first explain these three terms – paraphrase, précis and summary.

To **paraphrase** is to rewrite something using different words without changing the original meaning: this is what is usually meant by the phrase, ‘in your own words.’ The paraphrase is usually clearer and more easily understood than the original, and is usually similar in length to the original. The purpose of a paraphrase is to convey the meaning of the original message and, in doing so, to prove that we have understood the passage well enough to restate it in our own words.

The **précis** (pronounced pray-see) is derived from the word ‘precise’. A précis usually reduces the length of the original passage by at least two-thirds. Every important idea must be retained, preferably in the order in which it appears in the original.

A **summary** is much shorter than the original text, and communicates the main idea of the text and the main supporting points written again ‘in one’s own words’. The summary should give someone who has not read the original a clear and accurate overview of the text. Writing a summary therefore requires a combination of précis writing ability and the ability to paraphrase.

23.3 WRITING SUMMARIES

23.3.1 The Art of Condensation

One of the skills required to write good précis and summaries is writing using a concise language. Before practicing writing précis and summaries, let us look at how we can say and write messages, sentences in brief.

Writers often load their prose with one or more extra words or phrases that do not seem add to the meaning of the sentence. Although such words and phrases can be meaningful in the appropriate context, they can easily be left out. We can **eliminate these unnecessary word and phrases**. For instance:

Completing the project proposal by June 10 is an impossibility without *some kind of* extra help.

For all purposes, American industrial productivity *generally* depends on *certain factors that are really* more psychological *in kind* than *of any given* technological aspect.

A more concise version is:

Completing the project proposal by June 10 is impossible without help.

American industrial productivity depends more on psychological than on technological factors.

A single word can sometimes replace a phrase. Therefore we can **convert phrases into single words** whenever possible. Often, an adjectival or adverbial phrases can be replaced with a single adjective or adverb. For example,

He is *never late* and is *always on time*.

He is *punctual*.

The employee *with ambition*... (= the **ambitious** employee)

The department *showing the best performance*... (= The **best-performing** department...)

The company *buys compressors from other countries* (= The company **imports** compressors)

Do you think you are *incapable of making mistakes*? (= Do you think you are **infallible**?)

√ Check Your Progress 1

A. Find single words for the phrases in italics and rewrite the sentences making appropriate changes wherever necessary.

1. The company *buys compressors from other countries*. [_ m _ _ t _]
2. The theory can be *checked to see whether it is true and accurate*. [v _ _ _ f _ _ d]
3. Jack is a person *who can do many different things*. He is quite talented. [_ v _ _ s _ _ l _]
4. The man is *expected to become the next CEO* of the company. [p _ _ s _ _ _ t _ _ _]
5. Pollution can *make his asthma become unpleasant and worse*. [a _ g r _ _ a _ _]
6. The case resulted in *a court decision that he was not guilty*. [_ c q _ _ t _ _ _]
7. The company decided to officially settle the disagreement between the two state government offices. [_ r _ _ t r _ _ _]
8. He thought his theory did not have any mistakes. [i _ f _ _ _ _ b _ _]

B. Revise these sentences to state their meaning in fewer words.

1. In the event that enough people protest, it will probably be revoked.
2. They have monitored the activities of conservationists in a cautious manner.
3. Citizens who knew what was going on voted him out of office.
4. He dropped out of school on account of the fact that it was necessary for him to help support his family.
5. There are twenty-five students who have already expressed a desire to attend the programme next summer.

Using a clause to convey meaning that could be presented in a phrase or even a word contributes to wordiness. We can therefore **convert modifying clauses into phrases or single words** where possible.

The report, *which was released recently*... (= the recently released report)

All applicants *who are interested in the job* must... (all job applicants)

The system *that is most efficient and accurate*... (=the most efficient and accurate system)

Writing that focuses directly on a point and maximizes meaning with minimum wordiness tends to be both clear and concise. Revising for clarity of meaning often makes writing more concise. Read this sentence:

The cause of the failure of our schools to teach basic skills is not understanding the influence of cultural background on learning.

The main verb of not sentence is: *is*, which does not pack much punch to the sentence. There are many nouns though: *cause, failure, influence* and *learning*—all these imply verbs – *to cause, to fail, to influence* and *to learn*, but are used as nouns.

Actions expressed in nouns rather than verbs are called nominalizations (The word nominalization is the noun form of the verb ‘to nominative’.) Letting verbs express action usually make sentences more dynamic, direct, clear and concise. Now read the revised sentence:

Our schools fail to teach basic skill because they don’t understand how cultural backgrounds influence learning.

✓ **Check Your Progress 2**

1. Our effective presentation of our study resulted in our success.
2. My suggestion is that we make alteration in the length of the cloak.
3. Everything today has the requirement of the conformity of people to some standard.
4. A revision of the programme will result in increases in our efficiency in the servicing of our customers.
5. Many engineering personnel have made comments regarding a lack of knowledge about what new information is available in the library as literature is filed into the library without any sort of notification.

When we combine ideas and sentences in a clause, we reduce the length of the sentence and text significantly. Read these two versions.

- A. There is a beautiful park near my house. The name of the park is Tian-Tan Park. This was built several hundred years ago. It is the biggest park in Beijing. The Tian-Tan Park is famous not only for its beauty but its quietness as well. (46 words)
- B. Near my house stands Tian-Tan, the biggest park in Beijing, built several hundred years ago and is now famous for not only its beauty but also its quietness. (28 words)

However, it is better to write short sentences that are correct and well formulated than long sentences that do not make sense.

23.3.2 Identifying the Topic Sentence

A paragraph is a group of sentences related to a particular topic, or central theme. Every paragraph has a key concept or main idea. The main idea is the most important piece of information the author wants you to know about the concept of that paragraph. A writer will state his/her main idea explicitly somewhere in the paragraph. That main idea may be stated at the beginning of the paragraph, in the middle, or at the end. The sentence in which the main idea is stated is the **topic sentence** of that paragraph.

Read the passage below:

For many years people have wished they could fly through the air like birds. Skydivers have found a way to fly without a machine. They jump from an airplane and fall at the rate of 120 miles an hour. The fall is so smooth that they don't feel like they're moving at all. When they pull the ripcord on their parachute they float the rest of the way to the ground.

Which sentence in the paragraph do you think summarizes the text best?

- a) Skydivers have found a way to fly without a machine.
- b) The fall is so smooth that they don't feel like they're moving at all.
- c) For many years people have wished they could fly through the air like birds.
- d) They jump from an airplane and fall at the rate of 120 miles an hour.

It is (a). The other sentences (b, c, and d) just elaborate what these ways of flying without a machine are. The topic sentence announces the general theme to be dealt with in the paragraph. Although the topic sentence may appear anywhere in the paragraph, it is usually first. The last sentence of a paragraph can also contain the topic sentence, it is likely to be a concluding sentence. It is used to sum up a discussion, to emphasize a point, or to restate all or part of the topic sentence so as to bring the paragraph to a close. It can fall in the middle of a paragraph as well, especially when a paragraph begins with an introductory sentence that is meant to grab your attention.

In order to find the topic sentence the best thing to do is ask yourself the question, "What is this about?" Keep asking yourself that question as you read a paragraph, until the answer to your question becomes clear.

✓ Check Your Progress 3

Study these paragraphs and say which the topic sentence in each of them is.

Text 1: Today, boys try to prove they are men in many different ways. Long ago, it was not hard for some boys to know they had become men. American Indians had ceremonies and tests for boys to prove they were men. In one tribe, boys were given drugs which made them see visions of the gods. Having a vision was the first step toward being a man. In another tribe, boys had to prove that they could stand pain. They had to lie still on ground covered with ants and let the ants bite them again and again. When the Indian boys had been through these ceremonies and tests, they knew they were men.

The topic sentence of this paragraph is:

- a) Today, boys try to prove they are men in many different ways.
- b) In another tribe, boys had to prove that they could stand pain.
- c) They had to lie still on ground covered with ants and let the ants bite them again and again.
- d) When the Indian boys had been through the ceremonies and tests, they knew they were men.

Text 2: The rules of conduct during an examination are clear. No books, calculators or papers are allowed in the test room. Proctors will not allow anyone with such items to take the test. Anyone caught cheating will be asked to leave the room. His or her test sheet will be taken. The incident will be reported to the proper authority. At the end of the test period, all materials will be returned to the proctor. Failure to abide by these rules will result in a failing grade for this test.

The topic sentence of this paragraph is:

- a) The rules of conduct during an examination are clear
- b) No books, calculators or papers are allowed in the test room.
- c) Anyone caught cheating will be asked to leave the room.
- d) Failure to abide by these rules will result in a failing grade for this test.

Text 3: Some people fall asleep easily. They drop off as soon as their heads hit the pillows. Others aren't so lucky. They toss and turn well into the night. Fortunately, there are solutions to sleeplessness. In many cases, one can avoid sleep problems by following a few simple guidelines. First sleepless people should refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages or drinks with caffeine before bedtime. Next, they should not exercise within three hours of bedtime. Finally, they need plan a sleep routine. Every day, they should go to bed at the same time and get up at the same time.

The topic sentence of this paragraph is:

- a) Some people fall asleep easily.
- b) Fortunately, there are solutions to sleeplessness.
- c) In many cases, one can avoid sleep problems by following a few simple guidelines.
- d) Every day, they should go to bed at the same time and get up at the same time.

23.3.3 Identifying Key Ideas

Any piece of writing is made up of a few key (or main) ideas. However, if all a writer did was to put these forward briefly and concisely, few – if any – readers would be able to fully grasp the writer's meanings, or be able to see the significance and implications of what he or she has to say. Consequently, writers tend to explain, extend, or 'flesh-out' what they think and say by including examples, evidence and expression and lead the reader through the piece to make it more understandable.

As a reader, though, our job is to grasp these key ideas or items of information; to understand the essential points in a text which we are reading. One useful technique to help you do this effectively is for you to underline (in pencil) or highlight (using 'highlighting'). Underlining key ideas will help you focus your attention on what you are reading and makes you think about the main ideas in a text.

When you are selecting ideas from a passage, ask yourself the following question: If this idea were omitted, would the fundamental meaning of the passage be changed?

Newspaper headlines are the best précis that we see around us. News headlines generally present the main idea very succinctly and clearly. Read the news item below and say which of the headlines best summarizes it.

New York, May 31 (AP): A pink cocktail dress worn by Audrey Hepburn in "Breakfast at Tiffany's" was auctioned for \$192,000 (euro143,000) - more than six times its estimated value.

The sleeveless dress, worn for the scene in which Holly Golightly discovers her brother has died, sold Wednesday to a private European buyer at Christie's sale of film and entertainment memorabilia. The auction house said it had expected the dress to sell for up to \$30,000 (euro22,000).

"The sale was filled with iconic pieces", said Helen Hall, Christie's head of entertainment memorabilia. "It captured people's imagination".

Hall said the auction house was pleased with the results of the sale, which brought in \$1.2 million (euro890,000).

1. Audrey Hepburn's dress bought by European buyer
2. Dress worn by Audrey Hepburn auctioned for \$192,000
3. A Private European buyer pays \$ 192,000 for a dress
4. The dress Audrey Hepburn wore in "Breakfast at Tiffany's"

Which of these do you think is a suitable headline? To find this out, read the news item and ask yourself 'What is the main idea?' It is definitely about a dress Audrey Hepburn wore in one of her films... It is also about the sale of her dress. It is about the huge price at which it was bought. The rest - who bought it and why - is important but not necessarily the main idea of the news item. Therefore the answer is (2).

✓ Check Your Progress 4

A. Here are some short news stories. Give appropriate headlines for each.

News story 1

ACTOR Robert Downey Jr was taken to jail Monday to start serving a 180-day sentence for using drugs and alcohol in violation of his probation following a 1996 drug conviction.

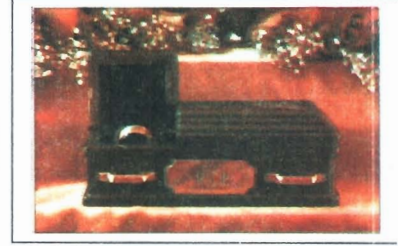
Downey, 32, his hair slicked back and his eyes damp, was handcuffed in the Malibu, California courtroom where he appeared with his wife.

"I have no excuses. I find my self defenceless", said Downey whose voice broke as he talked about his 16-year battle with substance abuse.

Downey pleaded no contest in September 1996 to cocaine possession and driving while intoxicated. He had been working recently on the films *US Marshals* and *In Dreams*. Downey starred in *Natural Born Killers* and *Richard III*, and received a Best Actor Oscar nomination for the lead role in *Chaplin*.

News story 2

NEW YORK (AFP) - Talk about burying the past. A New York divorcee has come up with a solution for failed marriages — a miniature coffin to lay those unwanted wedding rings to rest.



“Give a dead marriage its proper, final resting place”, the company offering the miniature caskets says on its website.

“The Wedding Ring Coffin is the perfect gift for yourself or a loved one for bringing closure after a divorce. It’s time to bury the past and move on to a new tomorrow”, it says.

The 15 by five centimeter (six by two inch) solid wood coffin has a black velvet ring insert, a choice of six brass plaques inscribed with messages including “I do NOT!” and “Six feet isn’t deep enough”, and costs 30 dollars.

“It’s a way to acknowledge the death of a marriage and to physically and symbolically close the lid on that chapter of your life”, Jill Testa, who came up with the idea, told the New York Post.

“Most people just stick their rings in the bottom of their jewelry box, in a corner of a sock or underwear drawer”, added Testa, who surprisingly describes her own divorce after 20 years of marriage as amicable.

Her company, Wedding Ring Coffin, even offers cards inviting people to join in your marriage wake, featuring the slogan: “You’re invited to my divorce party. Join me as I close the lid on my marriage”.

We have so far discussed characteristics of a good précis or a summary. Since the writing requires you to be clear and concise, we must choose our words carefully and arrange them skillfully we get the maximum amount of meaning into the minimum space. In précis writing it is necessary to say as much as possible in as few words as possible. A word may substitute for a phrase and a phrase for a clause.

✓ Check Your Progress 5

Read this passage and do the tasks that follow.

Computer games have been extremely popular for decades now and almost every household has at least one computer. However, it can be seen that playing these games causes social, educational and personal problems of several kinds both to youngsters and society. Firstly, youngsters who spend a great deal of time in front of a monitor are not playing sport. As a result, they are more likely to be overweight and less healthy, so more prone to diseases such as diabetes. In addition, the games themselves are often quite violent which add to many problems such as the lack of interaction and social skills with their friends and relatives. If we wish children to grow up to become well-adjusted members of society, these games should be more tightly controlled.

- A. Identify the topic sentence.
- B. Write down the main ideas.

C. Rewrite these sentences. Remove extra words and phrases.

1. Computer games have been extremely popular for decades now and almost every household has at least one computer.
2. However, it can be seen that playing these games causes social, educational and personal problems of several kinds both to youngsters and society.
3. As a result, they are more likely to be overweight and less healthy, so more prone to diseases such as diabetes.
4. In addition, the games themselves are often quite violent which add to many problems such as the lack of interaction and social skills with their friends and relatives.

D. Now, write the précis, which should not exceed 50 words.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

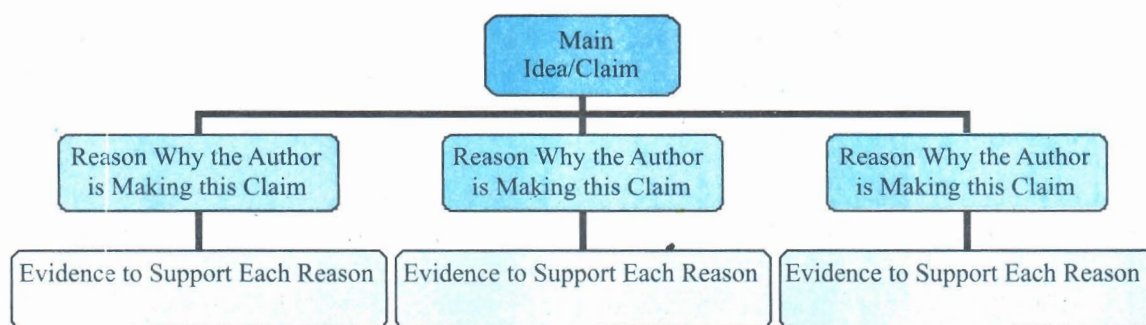
.....

.....

23.3.4 Identifying the Main Claim and Supporting Arguments

Every essay contains many ideas but the first thing you need to determine is what the **central thesis** or claim of the text is what everything else in the essay tries to establish or demonstrate. You need to be able to state this claim in one clear sentence. This can be a claim, an assertion that something is true. It is not a question (e.g., “Should human cloning be allowed?”), and it is not just the topic (e.g., “the legality of human cloning”). It is the author’s overall position; for example, “Human cloning should not be made legal”.

You should skim each text before reading it carefully and, after skimming, try to determine the central thesis or claim. Then you will be able to go on to the next step. The next thing you need to look for is the author’s specific arguments in defense of his or her overall position (thesis). Usually an author gives more than one argument in favour of his/her thesis. A text can be seen as the following structure:



Let us look at one such text to explain this structure. Read the following text, it has **one main thesis and three supporting arguments** and **one conclusion**:

The government should provide more financial assistance to parents who use childcare. Childcare centres may assist children in their early development. They give children an opportunity to mix with other children and to develop social skills at an early age. A whole range of learning occurs in childcare centres. Parents and children need to spend some time apart. Children become less dependent on their parents and parents themselves are less stressed and more effective care-givers when there are periods of separation. Recent studies indicate that the parent-child relationship can be improved by the use of high-quality childcare facilities. Parents who cannot go to work because they don't have access to childcare facilities cannot contribute to the national economy. They are not able to utilize their productive skills and do not pay income tax. Non-working parents can become a drain on the tax system through dependent spouse and other rebates. Government support for childcare services assists individual families and is important for the economic prosperity.

Make notes of the claim and the three arguments:

the claim.....

the arguments

(1).....

(2)

(3).....

The claim asserts a conclusion — an idea, an opinion, a judgment, or a point of view – that the writer wants you to accept. The support includes reasons (shared beliefs, assumptions, and values) and evidence (facts, examples, statistics, and authorities) that give readers the basis for accepting the conclusion. It is also necessary to identify the type of the author's arguments. We also need to identify how the author tries to persuade us: by appealing to our reason or intellect or to our emotions.

How does the author support his claim? With reason or evidence?

Read the following text.

Women are reported to be stronger than men, not through actual physical strength but through their immune system. It was thought that women lived longer than men because they took fewer risks; men were more likely to do dangerous jobs. However in modern times, there is much more equality between the sexes and still they continue to live longer. A woman today can expect to live 79.8 years – five years longer than a male. Although the gap has narrowed slightly in recent years, male life expectancy is only at the level enjoyed by women 30 years ago.

It has been discovered that the real reason for longer lives in women is their immune system. A team led by Dr Richard Aspinall and Dr Jeffery Pido-Lopez tracked the number of new white cells – known as T-cells – in 46 healthy males and all women between 20 and 56 per millilitre.

In both sexes, the thymus gland, which produces T-cells, made fewer cells with increasing age. Yet women still had higher levels of new T-cells than men of the same age, according to a report in the magazine New Scientist. The researchers then looked at the statistics for deaths in Britain from pneumonia and influenza between 1993 and 1998. They found more men than women died from the diseases and that the trend mirrored the difference in thymus activity between the sexes.

What the writer does in this passage is to base his argument very firmly on the evidence from a research study done by Dr Richard Aspinall and Dr Jeffery Pido-Lopez, and a report in a magazine *New Scientist* and statistics from Britain. All these are put forth as evidence, and they appeal more to our reason than emotions.

✓ Check Your Progress 6

Read these passages and try to identify the main claim and the supporting arguments.

Text 1: We should know that all the money in the world could not have built an atomic bomb in 1936. Atomic energy was known, and many of its properties were understood. It had been released in small quantities in laboratories, and its release in large quantities in the sun and the stars had been studied. But the critical information and the critical direction to follow for releasing it in large amounts on earth were lacking in 1936, and no one could have used two billion dollars for making an atomic bomb at that time. It is this that is important in understanding the relation of science to industry, to medicine, and to the public. There has to be knowledge before it can be applied. At a certain stage of scientific development, theoretically critical knowledge becomes available. Before that moment – which no one can guarantee in advance – the knowledge cannot be applied. After that moment application is reasonably certain and only the special techniques for its utilization need to be worked out.

Text 2: The objectives of science study in general education are not always best met by survey courses covering a large area in a limited time. These are too likely to be courses about science rather than courses in science. They are apt to be dogmatic rather than inherently convincing. The student is likely to be taught a great many dramatic contemporary results of science rather than underlying principles and fundamental facts. If a survey course is to be completely outmoded in a few years by new advances, one cannot blame the student for failure to appreciate the basic fundamental truths; science is indeed to him a casual, ephemeral thing. This is not to imply that no advantage should be taken of new applications of science or recent discoveries to stimulate interest and secure motivation; however the cake should not be all frosting. It is usually less confusing and far more satisfying actually to learn and understand the principles behind a group of phenomena and how they bring these phenomena into being than to learn and attempt to remember a large number of superficial facts about the phenomenon.

23.3.5 Making Inferences

Writers often tell you more than they say directly. They give you hints or clues that help you “read between the lines”. Using these clues to give you a deeper understanding of your reading is called inferring. When you infer, you go beyond the surface details to see other meanings that the details suggest or imply (not stated).

Read the following passage and jot down all the facts the author gives you about baths in the Roman society.

For the ancient Romans, taking a bath was a very special occasion. Because they considered bathing a social opportunity, they constructed huge public baths that put our modern-day indoor pools and spas to shame. Not only were the baths themselves lavishly decorated, they were also surrounded by shops, libraries, and lounges so that a person could shop, read or chat after bathing. The famed Baths of Caracalla, for example, offered Roman citizens massages and saunas in addition to a gymnasium and gardens for after-bath walks in lovely surroundings. Art lovers that they were, the

Romans also frequently built art galleries into their bathing facilities. There were also kitchens, where food was prepared to serve hungry bathers. Although initially men and women bathed separately, mixed baths became the fashion until 500 A.D., when the coming of Christianity brought the public baths to an end.

Baths in the roman society were lavishly decorated and had shops, libraries, lounges, saunas, massage parlours, gardens, gymnasiums, art galleries, kitchens.

What do all these tell you about baths in the Roman society? The text tells you that taking a bath was a very special occasion, and was a social opportunity. What can we infer from the text? Which of these is true?

- i. The ancient Romans were the first to lead a life of pure luxury.
- ii. If the Romans had spent more time governing and less time bathing, the Roman Empire would still exist today.
- iii. The ancient Romans made luxury and socializing a part of bathing.

The answer is (iii). We can infer that Roman bath was full of luxuries and was a place where people could socialize. There is nothing in the text that can suggest that Roman spent a large part of their time in baths, nor that they were the first to lead a life of pure luxury. When we summarize the above text, we need to state the inference in clear terms. In drawing such conclusions (making inferences), we are really getting at the main idea of the text – what the author actually wishes to convey through the details and facts. Merely getting the facts right is not enough – we must think about what these facts mean.

✓ Check Your Progress 7

Here are some passages. Note down the main facts and details that have been provided and state the inference you would make from these facts/details.

1. In one study, 93 per cent of people who suffered from chronic muscle or bone pain lacked enough vitamin D. Another study done by Harvard University showed that vitamin D, which we get mainly from sunlight, fatty fish, orange juice, and breakfast cereals, prevents bone fractures better than calcium does. Vitamin D also reduces the risk of getting arthritis by one-third. Getting the proper amount of vitamin D lowers blood pressure and seems to slow the growth of cancer cells. Furthermore, adequate vitamin D reduces the risk of getting multiple sclerosis by 50 percent and schizophrenia by 90 percent.
2. Not surprisingly, the crime victims are often called upon to identify the person who robbed or attacked them. For a jury, the victim's testimony is often proof positive that the accused is guilty. After all, who can better identify the wrongdoer than the person harmed? This is just common sense. Yet as is so often the case, common sense can be misleading. As it turns out, crime victims don't necessarily make reliable witnesses. Overcome with fear, they often close their eyes or focus fixedly on the weapon being used to threaten them. As a result, they don't get a good look at the thief or attacker. While it's not true that crime victim testimony is always inaccurate, it's also true that one can't assume a victim's identification is automatic proof of guilt.

We have discussed so far some of the skills that we need to write good summaries.

23.4 NOTE MAKING AND NOTE TAKING

Effective note making is a key writing skill, with a number of practical uses. Good note making techniques lead to accurate essays. Although you are the only person who will read your notes, clarity and organization are still important.

Read this passage from the book 'Health is Wealth' by Laura Higgins (2003). The main points are in italics. Make notes from them.

Have you ever wished that you could quickly shake a bad mood and turn a bad day into a good one? Research suggests that there are *three different fast, effective ways to give yourself a mood makeover*. The first way is *to sing an upbeat song*. According to the British journal **Psychology and Psychotherapy**, *singing takes you away from your everyday existence*. It also *lowers tension levels* and improves mood almost instantly. The second way to boost your mood is *to write about what is annoying you*. In a recent study, psychologist Robin Kowalski had one group of angry people write about what was bothering them and a second group write about other topics. Afterward, the people who wrote about their gripes felt significantly happier than those who didn't. The third way to feel better is *to eat food that soothes you*. Everyone attaches positive associations to certain foods, especially ones like ice cream, chocolate, and cookies, and eating a comforting food will *often lift your spirits*.

Your notes can read like this

Source: Laura Higgins' 'Health is Wealth' (2003)

Improve mood – three ways

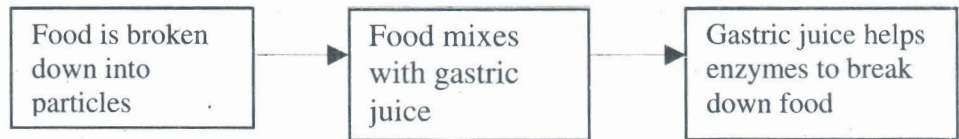
- sing a song – takes one away from the present, lowers tensions (British Journal – Psychology and Psychotherapy)
- to write about annoys you (study by psychologist Robin Kowalski – those who wrote about why they were angry felt happier)
- to eat food you like

Usually when we are making notes from a written text or taking down notes while listening (to a talk or a lecture) we develop our own style of note-making. We use typical abbreviations, and signs which we can read later. It is not always useful to use abbreviations too much, it may be impossible to understand them in the future.

We often use diagrams, flow charts and tree diagrams to put down information in a clear manner.

Digestion is when food is broken down into smaller particles. This happens so that food can be absorbed into the bloodstream. Dr. Beaumont proved that part of this process happens in the stomach. The food in the stomach is mixed with gastric juice. This is very acidic. It contains lots of hydrochloric acid. Gastric juice helps the enzymes in the stomach to break down the food. Dr. Beaumont also found that the digestive enzymes work best at body temperature, which is 37 C. They still work at lower temperatures, but they work more slowly.

See how the information is recorded in the form of a diagram.



23.5 SUMMARIZING SPEECH AND CONVERSATIONS

It is easy to summarize written texts because we have read and reread them many times, and usually the texts are coherent and written in a planned way. Usually interviews, conversations and speeches are difficult to summarize because we have to take notes and write summaries by listening to them once. Also interviews and conversation are not planned; speakers often fumble, repeat a sentence or a phrase, or expand a single idea with many examples. Speeches are easier to summarize as the speakers usually prepare speeches carefully and they are more organized than other spoken discourse.

Read this interview between a student and an examiner. The examiner is trying to find out what kind of general awareness the student has. As the examiner puts questions to the student and listens to the answers, he is also making notes of the important points. Underline in the conversation below, the points you think the examiner is noting down.

A: What newspaper do you read mostly?

B: I read the Hindu, which is, I think, South India's biggest national newspaper. I like it because it is interesting for local news, but at the same time, it has very good coverage of other national news items, and its' good for international news as well.

A: Do you read any weekly magazine?

B: Um, yes... I read the Economic Times, which is closely associated with my work.

A: What about television?

B: Well unfortunately, I don't watch television. I find I don't really have time for that. But listen to the radio sometimes – to the news and news discussion programmes.

Now read the notes by the examiner:

The Hindu—interesting for local news – good coverage – national and international news/ weekly magazine – The Economics Times – related to work/no TV – no time/ Radio – news and discussion programmes

Here is the report the examiner writes on the basis of his notes:

The candidate reads the Hindu and the weekly magazine, The Economic Times for local, national, international news. He also listens to the news and news discussion programmes on the radio.

Often, in the newspaper, we find political addresses and important speeches being summarized. Again, the writer here picks out the main ideas of the gist of the speech and reorganizes them in the news report. However, the writer also quotes

some important lines from the speech. It is because of this that we remember some lines from very important speeches made in the past. Recall:

... and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge... (Nehru, 1947)

23.6 SUMMARIES FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES

When we write summaries for research purposes, we have to do more than condense the original to a shorter length. Unlike précis the summary has to

- 1) offer a balanced coverage of the original (we have a tendency to include more from the earlier part of the original in a summary)
- 2) present the source material in neutral fashion
- 3) present the source material in one's own words (and not the original writer's)

We do not say anything about the length of the summary because this will largely be determined by your instructor. An instructor may ask for a one page or 1000 word summary depending on the length of the original source. Unlike précis, a summary is not characterized on the basis of its length.

Before you write the summary, consider why your audience would want to read it. Why shouldn't the reader just read the original? Summaries benefit the reader because they

- offer a concise, general version of the original information.
- provide quick overviews of material for a busy reader.
- show readers that you have understood the general point of a text.
- allow you to introduce knowledge within a research context: you can summarize someone's argument in order to analyze or critique it.

In academic writing, especially, when you write a project report or a dissertation or a term paper, a common practice is to use material from the internet or from text books without telling your reader that you have taken them from somewhere. This act of not acknowledging the source is called plagiarism – which is a legal offence. In the next section we will talk about plagiarism and the ways in which we can avoid them.

23.6.1 Plagiarism

Chetan had to write a term paper on nanotechnology for his school science project, and found some very good reading material on the Internet. He read an article once and found it interesting and well written. He felt that he himself would not be able to improve on what was so well written. So he copied the article and pasted it into his paper.

He quickly changed the font so it matched the rest of the document and continued with the rest. What Chetan did was a big mistake. He committed a legal offence. He committed plagiarism.

Plagiarism is when you use someone else's words or ideas and pass them off as your own. It is not allowed in college and university and is also a legal offence. It

was plagiarism because he did not know this information before he came to the website. These were not his thoughts but someone else's. By copying whole paragraphs from different places, he didn't have to spend time thinking about the subject, gathering his own thoughts about it, and then putting it in his own words.

Let's start with a definition:

Plagiarize: to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: use (a created production) without crediting the source vi: to commit literary theft: present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source – **plagiarizer** *n*

FROM: *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary 9th ed.*, (Springfield, Ma: Merriam 1981, p. 870).

Now what does this mean? The first thing it means is that it is morally and legally wrong to copy something out of a book, newspaper, journal or any other printed source. Many of us do not realize that it is a criminal offence, and we directly copy something word for word in our term paper, dissertation, and project. What this means is that if the language, whether it is a phrase or a sentence, is not what you have not composed on your own, it is not yours and cannot be used.

Do you understand what plagiarism is? Read this example and let us find out whether Ravi has plagiarized or not.

What Ravi read in a book by Michael Ventura called "The Tools of an Animal":

Different tools shape words differently, the way different tools build furniture and shoes differently.... Pen and paper are slow and messy, of course. Modernity loves speed and claims to hate mess. But speed is only a value when it's useful, and it isn't always useful. Slowness can be useful too. Using an instrument that doesn't let you go too fast can make you pause where you might not have, and a pause at the right time can change or even save your life, not to mention your work.

What Ravi wrote:

Most writers have come to depend on computers, and they can't imagine writing a paper without one. Sometimes computers aren't the right tool for a writer's task, sometimes using an instrument that doesn't let you go too fast can make you pause where you might not have. A pause at the right time can change or even save your life, not to mention your work.

There is plagiarism towards the end of the passage because Ravi borrows the author's exact words "using.... Work". There is no indication in Ravi's writing that this was originally written by someone else. A person who reads Ravi's essay will think that it is Ravi's thoughts. This is a form of cheating.

23.6.2 Avoiding Plagiarism

How can Ravi and Chetan avoid plagiarism? To avoid plagiarism, they should have given credit whenever they used another person's idea, opinion, or theory or used facts, statistics, graphs, drawings, or any pieces of information. How should they have given credit to the original authors? They could have used quoted another person's actual spoken or written words; or paraphrased of another person's spoken or written words.

In this section, we will discuss three ways in which we can avoid plagiarism:

(a) Quoting (b) paraphrasing (c) giving references.

Quoting

Let us go back to what Ravi wrote in his assignment. How could he avoid plagiarism. The first way of avoiding plagiarism as we have said is quoting. He could have quoted the exact words of the author, Michael Ventura, in this way.

Most writers have come to depend on computers, and they can't imagine writing a paper without one. But, in an essay titled "The Tools of an Animal", Michael Ventura reminds us that sometimes computers aren't the right tool for a writer's task, "sometimes using an instrument that doesn't let you go too fast can make you pause where you might not have; and a pause at the right time can change or even save your life, not to mention your work."

By putting quotation marks ("..."), Ravi makes it clear that the words used in the paper are not his own but those of Michael Ventura.

Paraphrasing

Another way in which Ravi could have avoided plagiarism is by **paraphrasing** Michael Ventura's words. He could have written:

Most writers have come to depend on computers, and they can't imagine writing a paper without one. But, in an essay titled "The Tools of an Animal", Michael Ventura reminds us that sometimes computers aren't the right tool for a writer's task because it does not let us pause and think, at times when using pen and paper we get time to think which can actually help us from a disaster.

In this case, Ravi had understood what the author wants to say and said the same thing in his own words. Ravi has paraphrased Michael Ventura's ideas.

Paraphrasing means taking another person's ideas and putting those ideas in your own words. Paraphrasing does NOT mean changing a word or two in someone else's sentence, changing the sentence structure while maintaining the original words, or changing a few words to synonyms. If you rearrange a sentence in any of these ways, you are writing too close to the original. That is still plagiarizing rather than paraphrasing.

Look at this example:

From William Zinsser's <i>On Writing Well</i> :	From a student's essay:
Good writing has an aliveness that keeps the reader reading from one paragraph to the next, and it's not a question of gimmicks to "personalize" the author. It's a question of using the English language in a way that will achieve the greatest strength and the least clutter.	An important quality of good writing is "aliveness" As Zinsser has claimed that to achieve aliveness, a writer must avoid gimmicks and instead use the English language to achieve great strength and a minimal amount of clutter.

There is plagiarism because the student's second sentence paraphrases what William Zinsser has said but the student's paraphrase also borrows too closely from the

original. The ideas are organized in the same way and the original sentence structure is the same. A few words have been cleverly changed.

In order to make sure you are paraphrasing in the first place, take notes from your reading *with the book closed*. Doing so will make it easier for you to put the ideas in your own words.

Giving references

Whenever you take ideas, paraphrase, or quote from a source, you need to indicate in your paper the sources from which the information came. For example, in the earlier example, we said,

... in an essay titled "*The Tools of an Animal*", Michael Ventura reminds us that... The writer of the summary tells us that the source of the idea is Michael Ventura's 'The Tools of an Animal' – this is the **reference**.

When we quote exact words from a source and put them in quotation marks, we need to say on what page of the book will the quotation be found. This is to help readers go to the source and read further on.

✓ Check Your Progress 8

Given below are two sets of original texts. Read the passages from the student essays and say whether there is plagiarism or not in them. Also explain why there is or is no plagiarism in each of the essays.

Text A

From a lecture by John C. Bean: Who among us begins writing an article by choosing a topic, narrowing it, and then writing a thesis statement and outline? Rather, most of us begin by being gradually drawn into a conversation about a question in our disciplines that doesn't yet seem resolved. We find something unsatisfying about this conversation; something is missing.... Whatever the source of our puzzlement, our own writing originates in our sense of a conflict or question.

From a student's essay: Often, people view the writing process as a rigid series of steps. First, you choose a topic, then you form a thesis. An outline precedes the first draft, revision succeeds the first draft and editing is always the final step. In practice, however, the writing process is not nearly so clear-cut. For instance, John C. Bean (1989) argues that writing often begins not with a thesis but with a question.

Text B

From James L. Kinneavy, William McCleary, and Neil Nakadate's *Writing in the Liberal Arts Tradition*: The goal of learning to write "in the liberal arts tradition" is the well-rounded writer—a person with training and experience in a range of writing tasks, from term papers to poems and stories.

From a student's essay: The authors of *Writing in the Liberal Arts Tradition* believe that "the goal of learning to write 'in the liberal arts tradition' is the well-rounded writer" (xiii). A well-rounded writer, they explain is one with training and practice in a variety of writing tasks (xiii).

Task adapted from <http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/class/sourcebk/frost3sumframe.html>

Using reporting verbs

In academic writing it will often be necessary to refer to the research of others and to report on their findings. In order to do so, we have to use reporting verbs such as ('Evans (1994) **suggests** that....', Brown (2001) **argues** that....).

In his article "Michael Dell turns the PC world inside out", Andrew E. Serwer (1997) *describes* how Michael Dell founded Dell Computers and *claims* that Dell's slow-cost, direct-sales strategy and high quality standards account for Dell's enormous success.

Describes and *claims* are reporting verbs. There are many such reporting verbs – *argue, mention, point out, highlight, suggest, state, allege, contend...*

Study the sample summary argument again. Can you identify any examples of reporting?

While introducing what someone's words or work, we need to be careful in choosing the right reporting verbs. Reporting verbs have different functions.

Some verbs are neutral: *describes, states, defines*

Some verbs draw attention to the author's viewpoint: *argues, disputed, conceded*

Some verbs convey information about the author's work: *investigated, evaluated, estimated*

Some verbs highlight the author's viewpoint: *believes, recognised, predicted*

23.7 LET US SUM UP

The goal of writing a summary of an article, a chapter, or a book is to offer as accurately as possible the full sense of the original, but in a more condensed form. A summary restates the author's main point, purpose, intent, and supporting details in your own words. The process of summarizing enables you to better grasp the original, and the result shows the reader that you understand it as well. In addition, the knowledge gained allows you to better analyze and critique the original.

First, we must try to find the main idea in the reading. Next, we skim through the article, glancing at any headings and graphics. The intent here is both to give ourselves a review of the work and to effectively engage ourselves with it. Then we go back and read the original text carefully, jotting down notes on or highlighting the important points. We try to identify the central idea/claim and the supporting elements the author uses to explain or back up her/his main information or claim.

When we write the summary, we make sure to state the author's name in the first sentence. We present the main idea, followed by the supporting points. The remainder of your summary should focus on how the author supports, defines, and/or illustrates that main idea. In writing the summary we need to only present the author's views, and try to be as objective as possible. As we revise and edit our summary, we compare also compare it with the original and ask ourselves questions such as: Have I rephrased the author's words without changing their meaning? Have I restated the main idea and the supporting points accurately and in my own words? Have I acknowledge the ideas I have borrowed?

23.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- A. 1. imports 2. verified 3. versatile 4. prospective
5. aggravate 6. acquittal 7. arbitrate 8. infallible

B.

If enough people protest, it will probably be revoked.

They have cautiously monitored the activities of conservationists.

Informed citizens voted him out of office.

He dropped out of school to support his family

Twenty-five students have expressed a desire to attend the programme next summer.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Our effective presentation of our study resulted in our success.
2. I suggest we alter length of the cloak.
3. Everything today requires people conform to some standard.
4. If we revise programme, our efficiency in customer service will increase.
5. Many engineers have commented about not being notified when new information is literature is filed in the library.

Check Your Progress 3

Text 1: (a) Today, boys try to prove they are men in many different ways.

Text 2: (d) Failure to abide by these rules will result in a failing grade for this test.

Text 3: (c) In many cases, one can avoid sleep problems by following a few simple guidelines.

Check Your Progress 4

(Answers may vary)

1. Downey jailed for Substance abuse
2. Burial to dead marriages/A coffin for unwanted wedding rings

Check Your Progress 5

- A. *The topic sentence:* Playing computer games causes social, educational and personal problems to youngsters and society and therefore should be controlled
- B. *The main ideas:* youngsters stop playing sport —become overweight and less healthy— more prone to diseases – games may be violent– leads to lack of interaction and social skills.

- C.
1. Computer games are popular and almost every household has a computer.
 2. Playing these games causes social, educational and personal problems.
 3. Children become more likely to be overweight and less healthy, and more prone to diseases.
 4. Games are often violent and can lead of less interaction with friends and relatives.

D. The précis

Nowadays almost every household has a computer. However, playing them causes social, educational and personal problems. Children can become overweight and more prone to diseases. Also, games are often violent and can lead of less interaction with friends and relatives. Therefore they need to be tightly controlled. (47 words)

Check Your Progress 6

1. The main claim is that there has to be critical knowledge before it can be applied.

Argument: in 1936 atom bombs could have been made because people did not know how to release atomic energy in large amounts on earth.

2. The main claim is that the objectives of science are not always best met by courses about science (survey courses) but by courses in science.

Argument: Survey courses teach superficial facts about phenomenon and results of science, which can get outmoded, and are dogmatic, though these courses stimulate interest and motivation.

The objectives of science are met by courses which teach the fundamental principles of science which are inherently convincing and long-lasting.

Check Your Progress 7

People who suffered from chronic muscle or bone pain — lacked vitamin D — study at Harvard University showed — vitamin D — from sunlight, fatty fish, orange juice, and breakfast cereals — prevents bone fractures — reduces risk of arthritis — proper amount of vitamin D lowers blood pressure — slow down growth of cancer cells — reduces risk of multiple sclerosis and schizophrenia

Inference: Vitamin D is essential for the prevention of many serious diseases crime victims called upon to identify the person who robbed or attacked them —for jury, victim's testimony — proof of the accused being guilty. However, crime victims not necessarily reliable witnesses — overcome with fear, close their eyes or look only at the weapon — as a result, don't get a good look at the attacker — victim testimony is not always inaccurate — cannot be treated as automatic proof of guilt.

Inference: victim's testimony is not reliable and should not be taken as the automatic proof of guilt.

Check Your Progress 8

Text A is not plagiarized

Text B is plagiarized because the second sentence is too close to the original sentence.