

The Key to Writing Effective Summaries:

What is a summary?

- ✓ A summary is a condensation of large amounts of ideas or information, which is written in YOUR OWN WORDS.

When should a summary be used?

- ✓ Use a summary when you want to borrow a main idea or information from a page, paragraph, or entire article.

How to summarize:

- ✓ Identify the Author, Title, and the Main Idea that you are working with
- ✓ Explain in YOUR OWN WORDS how supporting points develop the main idea
- ✓ A summary should reflect only the author's ideas, not your own (see commentary worksheet)

Characteristics of an Effective Summary:

- ✓ Focuses on main ideas, rather than minor points
 - ✓ Is shorter than the original document
 - ✓ Is written in YOUR OWN WORDS
 - ✓ Does NOT include quotations
 - ✓ Order of Ideas needs to be consistent with the author's purpose, tone, and attitude but does not need to follow original order
 - ✓ Should function as an independent text
- ** This means that the reader should be able to come away with a full sense of the original document's content.

** Example:

Sample Article:

Holidays were once typically days of actual common celebration, of parades, ceremonies, feasts, songs, speeches, and marches. Today, most of this has been replaced by the public holiday's private competitor, the vacation... The vacation is a relatively recent innovation, the product of bourgeois prosperity. The idea that wage earners could take paid vacation in an even more recent development; it only became widespread after World War I. It's fair to say that even in the 1930's and 1940's ordinary workers spent much more of their leisure time attending parades, carnivals, funerals, executions, and other communal events than they do today, and a good deal less time checking into motels. Today even solemn public holidays-holidays with as much contemporary meaning as Martin Luther King's birthday-are widely seen as simply more private leisure time, which is why we routinely fiddle with their dates to create three-day weekends.

- Mickey Kaus, from *The End of Equality*

Effective Summary:

Holidays, once actual common celebrations typified by public gatherings like parades, carnivals, or even funerals and executions, have gradually been replaced by vacations, the private bourgeois enjoyment of leisure time, divorced from any sense of public commemoration.

** Examples taken from: Spatt, Brenda. Writing From Sources. 4th Ed. St. Martin's Press: New York, 1996