

Summarizing an article or a video

Modified from http://www.class.uidaho.edu/adv_tech_wrt/resources/general/how_to_summarize

The Process:

- Read the article once through without stopping. Or, if watching a video, watch it through without stopping.
- Re-read the article; this time you are looking for the **author's main point or points** and the **main results**. Hint: you should find the main point in the first couple of paragraphs and in the conclusion.
- Write out the main point in a clear, understandable way.
- Relay the main results and author's conclusion in a clear, understandable way.
- Include any important supporting evidence, but avoid the trivial information.

Tips for writing the summary:

Cite the reference in full at the top of your summary page with correct bibliographic form

Make sure to include the author and title of the work in the first sentence of your summary (see the example below). Other things to keep in mind:

- Write in the present tense.
- Keep it short, you are not summarizing EVERY point but the main ones that present the key ideas.
- Avoid using direct quotes but if you must, cite the page reference in your summary
- Avoid adding your own opinions, ideas, or interpretations. The purpose of writing a summary is to accurately represent what the author wanted to say, not to provide a critique (unless you are being asked to include this, which would then come after the presentation of the summary).

This is an example of a very brief article summary. I would like you to include a bit more detail for a more comprehensive summary that is about 1 page (double spaced) in length.

Small, Meredith (2003). Our Babies, Ourselves. In Arron Podolefsky and Peter Brown (Eds.), *Applying Cultural Anthropology: An Introductory Reader*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
<http://home.comcast.net/~lcpotts/OurBabies.pdf>

In her article, "Our Babies, Ourselves", Meredith Small discusses how practices of infant care are shaped by culture. She argues that human infants are born "neurologically unfinished and unable to coordinate muscle movement" (p.4). Researchers who study infant and child development in an evolutionary perspective conclude that because of this there must be ways to care for babies that are more adaptive than others. Cross-cultural comparisons show that there are broad patterns of infant care in human societies which seem to support this idea: for example, infants are always in contact with a parent, sometimes sleeping in the same room; a crying infant is comforted immediately; and infants are breast fed on demand over long periods (up to 3 or 4 years). Moreover, research shows that the exception to this pattern is found mostly in Western cultures. The Western ideals of independence and individualism lead to scheduled feeding times, sleeping alone and allowing babies to cry without comforting them. The author points out that issues around infant sleeping, feeding and comforting patterns are the most contentious in Western cultures today.