

How to summarise a text

A summary is a condensed version (generally one third in length) of a larger text. To write a summary, you should use your own words to express briefly the main idea and relevant details of the piece you have read. Your purpose in writing the summary is to give the basic ideas of the original reading.

While reading the original work, take note of what or who is the focus and ask the usual questions that reporters use: 'Who?', 'What?', 'When?', 'Where?', 'Why?', 'How?'. Using these questions to examine what you are reading can help you to write the summary. Sometimes, the central idea of a text is stated in the introduction or first paragraph, and the supporting ideas of this central concept are presented one by one in the following paragraphs. Always read the introductory paragraph thoughtfully and look for a thesis statement. Then write the main point of the text, using your own words. This should be a sentence that expresses the central idea of the text.

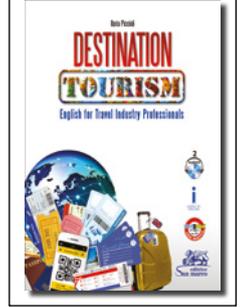
While reading the original text for the second time, underline important ideas and circle key terms. You may also label each paragraph in the margins, stating its main idea. Writing brief summaries of each paragraph will allow you to draft a brief outline of the text you want to sum up. At that point write your rough draft of the summary. Combine the information you have highlighted into paragraphs, trying to paraphrase as much as possible. Don't forget to use connectors to make your text coherent and cohesive. Remember to include all the important ideas and to omit details. When you edit your version, be concise and eliminate needless words and repetitions.

Sentence connectors

Sentence connectors are used to link ideas from one sentence to the next and to give paragraphs coherence. Sentence connectors perform different functions and are placed at the beginning of a sentence. They are used to introduce, order, contrast, sequence ideas, theory, data, etc.

The following table lists useful connectors.

Logical/Sequential Order	Oder of Importance
Firstly/Secondly/Thirdly/... Next/Last/Finally In addition Furthermore Also At present/Presently Then Eventually	Most/More importantly Most significantly Above all Primarily It is essential/Essentially
Contrast	Result
Although/Though But However On the other hand On the contrary By/In comparison In contrast	As a result As a consequence Therefore Thus Consequently Hence
Comparison	Reason/Cause
Similarly Likewise Also	Because Since For The reason for



ACTIVITIES

1 The main idea of a paragraph is what all the sentences are about. Identifying the main idea of each paragraph is essential to write a good summary. Read each of the following paragraphs and ask, 'What's your point?' That will help you zero in on the main idea. Read each paragraph carefully. Choose the best answer to the questions that follow.

1 Nairobi is the classical example of an African city born in the 20th century: all its communications, starting with the railway, form a mesh upon which it grew and now thrives.

What's the main idea?

- A Nairobi is a typical African city
- B Communications have been essential for the development of Nairobi.
- C The train is the most important means of transport in Nairobi.

2 Since independence, Kenya has enjoyed a reputation as being one of the most stable countries in Africa, both politically and economically. Though Kenya has got problems like anywhere else in the world, in general terms the country is stable.

What's the main idea?

- A Kenya became a stable country thanks to independence.
- B There are many problems in Kenya like in the rest of the world.
- C Kenya enjoys stability, both from a political and economic point of view.

3 Nairobi's population is a curious mixture of different cultures and creeds. Whites, Asians and African rub shoulders every day as they go about their business in the city.

What's the main idea?

- A White people and Asian people own most of the businesses in Nairobi.
- B Nairobi is a fine example of people of different ethnic groups living as one.
- C People of different ethnic groups work together in Nairobi.

4 Only 50 years ago a pilot flying low over Nairobi might have missed it if he hadn't been watching carefully. There is little chance of that happening today. In addition to the towering Kenyatta Conference Centre and Intercontinental Hotel, Kenya has the highest rate of population growth in the world, which has resulted in overcrowding in many areas of the capital.

What's the main idea?

- A It was difficult to see Nairobi for pilots flying low over the city fifty years ago.
- B The Kenyatta Conference Centre and the Intercontinental Hotel are two landmarks in Nairobi.
- C Today Nairobi is a big city with distinctive features of its own.

5 'Colonial barriers' still exist in the wealthy white districts of Nairobi such as Langata and Karen. To step into the Muthaiga or Karen Country Clubs, with their uniformed, noiseless servants, is like going back in time some 50 years.

What's the main idea?

- A The black community has not fully integrated with the white one in some districts of Nairobi.
- B Black servants are employed in some district of Nairobi.
- C Country clubs are old-fashioned in some districts of Nairobi.