

How to Write a Summary

A "stand-alone" summary is a summary produced to show a professor that you have read and understood something. It is common in many lower division undergraduate level classes to get assignments that ask you to read a certain number of articles and summarize them. This is also a very common type of writing assignment in graduate school.

How to produce a summary:

1. Read the article to be summarized and be sure you understand it.
2. Outline the article. Note the major ideas.
3. Write a first draft of the summary without looking at the article.
4. Always use paraphrase when writing a summary. If you do copy a phrase from the original be sure it is a very important phrase that is necessary and cannot be paraphrased. In this case put "quotation marks" around the phrase.
5. Target your first draft for approximately 1/4 the length of the original.

The features of a summary:

1. Start your summary with a clear identification of the type of work, title, author, and main point in the present tense.

Example: In the feature article "Four Kinds of Reading," the author, Donald Hall, explains his opinion about different types of reading.

2. Check with your outline and your original to make sure you have covered the important points.
3. Never put any of your own ideas, opinions, or interpretations into the summary. This means you have to be very careful of your word choice.
4. Write using "summarizing language." Periodically remind your reader that this is a summary by using phrases such as *the article claims*, *the author suggests*, etc.
4. Write a complete bibliographic citation at the beginning of your summary. A complete bibliographic citation includes as a minimum, the title of the work, the author, the source.

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Which sample best meets the requirements of a “stand-alone” summary?
Please support your answer.

Option A

The editorial I read encourages is about humanitarian aid workers. The job of humanitarian aid workers is to take care of others during disasters and times of war while remaining nonbiased. It is in the best interest of the United States to protect these workers, because we are all under the threat of war. These workers are under protected, understaffed, and not recognized as much as the military. There are also many workers that die in the line of duty and their efforts must be recognized.

Option B

Published in the New York Times on July 22, 2002, Anthony Lake's editorial, "Honoring Relief Workers," encourages readers to appreciate and recognize humanitarian aid workers. The job of humanitarian aid workers, according to Lake, is to take care of others during disasters and times of war while remaining nonbiased. He claims that it is in the best interest of the United States to protect these workers, "because we are all under the threat of war." Lake further suggests that these workers are under protected, understaffed, and not recognized as much as the military. He next explains that there are also many workers that die in the line of duty and finally argues that their efforts must be recognized.

Option C

Anthony Lake's editorial, "Honoring Relief Workers," encourages readers to appreciate and recognize humanitarian aid workers. The job of humanitarian aid workers is to take care of others during disasters and times of war while remaining nonbiased. This is so very true. Mr. Lake explains that it is in the best interest of the United States to protect these workers, because we are all under the threat of war. This writer wants you to know that the workers are under protected, understaffed, and not recognized as much as the military, and I agree with him. Blake next explains that there are also many workers that die in the line of duty and finally argues that their efforts must be recognized.