

Class Lecture (29th July 2012)

Précis Writing

Précis writing is a basic and very useful skill. It has been variously referred to as 'abbreviation', 'subtraction', 'abstract', 'summary', and 'condensation'. The French gave it the name 'précis' — the pruning away of all that is inessential.

"A précis is a brief, original summary of the important ideas given in a long selection. Its aim is to give the general effect created by the original selection." It is a concise and lucid summary that forsakes all unnecessary details (including illustrations, amplifications, and embellishments) in favor of reproducing the logic, development, organization and emphasis of the original.

Précis writing aims at intelligent reading and clear, accurate writing. It is a skill of both analysis and genesis that critically questions every thought included and excluded, each word used to express those thoughts, and the proportions and arrangements of those thoughts — both in the original and in the précis. In its exaction it mercilessly reveals an author's wordiness and looseness or thinness of thought and construction. It should strengthen our style, our sense of proportion and emphasis, and our sensitivity to word meanings and an author's viewpoint,

Four main pillars of Précis

1. Simple
2. Concise
3. Clear
4. Complete

A Précis must fulfill following requirements

1. All Important/relevant Ideas must included
2. All unimportant/irrelevant ideas must be excluded
3. It must be in the form of continuous narrative

Elements of Good Précis

1. A good Précis should give leading thoughts and general impression of the passage summarized.
2. A good Précis should be continuous and compact piece of prose.
3. A Précis should be clear, concise and complete in sense of original thoughts.
4. The précis should be written from the original author's point of view, without editorializing.
5. A good précis is normally 1/3 of the original passage.
6. Indirect Speech must be used.
7. 3rd person pronoun must be used.
8. Generally Past Tense must be used.

What should we avoid?

1. Avoid your own comments and other irrelevancies.
2. Avoid borrowing sentences and phrases from the original passage.
3. Avoid emphasizing the wrong points.
4. Avoid exceeding the prescribed length (1/3). *"5 Words could be"*
5. Avoid Bad style of Grammar and Structure.
6. Avoid redundancies of expression.
7. Avoid introductory remarks, Illustrations, Examples and side-remarks.
8. Avoid Informal language.

Method of Précis Writing

1. Reading:

➤ **First Reading:**

- (i) Read every word slowly and carefully until you clearly understand the sense of the passage.
- (ii) Look up all unfamiliar words, phrases, and allusions
- (iii) Identify the dominating idea, the essential thought, of the passage. Ask if this idea were omitted, would the fundamental meaning of the passage be changed?
- (iv) Determine what emphasis and space to give the thought in each section; write a heading for each section.

➤ **Second Reading:**

- (i) Underscore with a pencil the important facts containing the essential thoughts. This is a process of differentiation between what is essential and what is not. Generally you will omit examples, illustrations, conversations, and repetitions.
- (ii) Reread your selections to see that they are wise and adequate.
- (iii) Determine if your underscoring expresses the main ideas.

➤ **Final Reading:**

Rapidly and intensely reread the origin, dwelling on the important facts selected for a précis.

2. Title:

We must give a striking title to our précis. There are two different techniques to extract the central point as a relevant title.

- a) Extract it from first Paragraph or sentence.
- b) Extract it from last paragraph or sentence.

3. Now write Précis with all rules and regulation listed above.