



WRITING CENTER

ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY

WHAT IS A SUMMARY?

A **SUMMARY** is a **short re-statement** in your own words of someone else's main point. A summary is always shorter, in length, than the original because the purpose is to distill the overall main point down to a sentence or a few sentences. You don't use quotation marks, but you still have to cite (name that person or source) and/or include an in-text citation.

WHAT A SUMMARY IS NOT

A **SUMMARY** is **not a description**. What some people call a summary is really a description. For example, "the author goes into detail about racism." This is not a summary, it is a description of the topic that the author discusses. The question is what point about racism does this author make?

HOW TO WRITE A SUMMARY

A **SUMMARY** **explains** to the reader what the author's point about the topic is. In order to explain, you have to understand. What is the author's main point? Out of everything he/she said, ***what was it all about?*** Once you have read and understand the original text...

- PUT IT AWAY and write from memory.
- Begin by **naming the author & title of work** and credit the author throughout. (These are his/her points, not yours!)
- Say what it's all about, in a nutshell. (That means you are NOT going to talk about everything)

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Use your own words

Avoid excessive quotes—don't use the author's words as a substitute for your lack of comprehension.

***Avoid words like "I think and I feel". You're not giving your opinion about what was said, you're just reporting what was said.** If there are parts of the article you don't understand, only summarize the parts you do understand. If you don't understand what the article is about at all—get help! You can't summarize what you don't understand!