

# Summarizing

UHCL Writing Center

Spring 2015

# Objective

- Summarizing is the art of representing information in a condensed form.
- It shows that that you understand an author's main point.
- It exemplifies that you are capable of discussing the author's argument without using his/her words.
- It also allows you the freedom to integrate another author's large work as a small piece in your puzzle.

# When to Summarize

- Summarizing is especially helpful in academic writing when...
  - You want to mention an author's primary argument, e.g. not give his entire explanation, just a snippet
  - You want to integrate several authors' related research into one key point in your argument
  - You want to show that an author's research is relevant to your argument without spending too much time on his/her information

# A Good Summary

- A good summary will...
  - Provide clear insight into the main points of the summarized text
  - Eliminate minor or unimportant details
  - Offer clear and logical relationships between information, such as cause and effect
  - Uses key words from the text, such as technical terms
- A bad summary will...
  - Provide too much information and make the reader ask “Why did he include this?,” bordering on paraphrasing
  - Repeat information unnecessarily
  - Fail to connect the idea with your writing
  - Overuse the original text’s wording, bordering on plagiarism

# Steps to Writing a Good Summary

1. Make notes as you read the text that you wish to summarize; mark significant points and arguments or relationships between facts.
2. Create a list or cluster of the primary ideas that you wish to include in your summary—is it simply the results of the research that you want to summarize or something else, such as the methods or factors influencing the study?
3. Write a paragraph discussing the bullets from your list; clarify any relationships of information.
4. Review the paragraph for redundant information or minor details that are unnecessary.
5. Be sure to include the author and title of the summarized text along with an explanation of how it directly relates to your research.

# An Example Summary

**Thesis: Small alterations in sleep patterns can improve overall quality of life for post-menopausal women suffering from depression.**

Stephenson (2009) discusses the downfalls of sleeping patterns that alter the body's natural clock, emphasizing side-effects such as drowsiness, increased errors in work, decreased work productivity, trouble concentrating, and changed behaviors in personal relationships. His research shows that women are more greatly affected by these aspects, especially women over 50-years-old, leading him to associate the effects with possible life stressors as well. This furthers Abbott's (2000) claim that women are at a higher risk of medical conditions exacerbated by sleep deprivation. Together, these articles offer support for the growing concern within the medical profession regarding sleep disturbances among post-menopausal women.

## An Example Summary (cont.)

**Thesis: Small alterations in sleep patterns can improve overall quality of life for post-menopausal women suffering from depression.**

Stephenson (2009) discusses the downfalls of sleeping patterns that alter the body's natural clock, emphasizing side-effects such as drowsiness, increased errors in work, decreased work productivity, trouble concentrating, and changed behaviors in personal relationships. His research shows that women are more greatly affected by these aspects, especially women over 50-years-old, leading him to associate the effects with possible life stressors as well. This furthers Abbott's (2000) claim that women are at a higher risk of medical conditions exacerbated by sleep deprivation. Together, these articles offer support for the growing concern within the medical profession regarding sleep disturbances among post-menopausal women.

## An Example Summary (cont. 2)

**Thesis: Universities have a responsibility to educate students on post-graduation effects of their career choices, such as the job market and earnings.**

Roberts (2002) found that students majoring in non-STEM-related fields were 12% more likely to suffer from personal stress and 21% more likely to seek medical treatment for stress-related issues. Students in his study were found to suffer from depression and anxiety at a much higher rate than their scientifically-employed counterparts. Further study revealed that of those who sought counseling, 26% said that they felt that poor employment opportunities were a contributing factor to their anxiety and what they evaluated as a low value of self-worth. This is a significant example of how impactful job prospects can be for an individual's health, suggesting that universities should be educating students more strongly with regard to chosen majors and career paths.



# An Example Summary

**Thesis: Universities have a responsibility to educate students on post-graduation effects of their career choices, such as the job market and earnings.**

Roberts (2002) found that students majoring in non-STEM-related fields were 12% more likely to suffer from personal stress and 21% more likely to seek medical treatment for stress-related issues. Students in his study were found to suffer from depression and anxiety at a much higher rate than their scientifically-employed counterparts. Further study revealed that of those who sought counseling, 26% said that they felt that poor employment opportunities were a contributing factor to their anxiety and what they evaluated as a low value of self-worth. This is a significant example of how impactful job prospects can be for an individual's health, suggesting that universities should be educating students more strongly with regard to chosen majors and career paths.

## Time to try...

Write 1-2 sentences summarizing the main point of the paragraph below for the thesis **“Domestic pilots should be better trained for reacting to unexpected situations.”**

Research of aeronautic safety has shown that pilot error was cited as causing 58% of domestic airplane crashes in the 1950s, representing the primary cause with an average of 53% from 1950-2010. Mechanical failure has caused an average of 20% of related crashes, with weather coming in at 12%. It is significant to note that, because there can be a combination of factors that work together to create a situation in which an aircraft fails, pilot error, while the most common cause of aircraft crashes, rarely is the sole cause. It is often accompanied by extenuating circumstances that increase the effects of pilots' decisions, such as bad weather and mechanical failure. In these instances, the situation might be recoverable, meaning that a pilot could have reacted differently and recovered the flight from crashing, but, for whatever reason, the decision a pilot made caused the situation to worsen and led to a crash.

## Time to try (cont.)...

Write 1-2 sentences summarizing the main point of the paragraph below for the thesis **“Domestic pilots should be better trained for reacting to unexpected situations.”**

Research of aeronautic safety has shown that pilot error was cited as causing 58% of domestic airplane crashes in the 1950s, **representing the primary cause with an average of 53% from 1950-2010**. Mechanical failure has caused an average of 20% of related crashes, with weather coming in at 12%. It is significant to note that, because there can be a combination of factors that work together to create a situation in which an aircraft fails, **pilot error**, while the most common cause of aircraft crashes, **rarely is the sole cause**. It is often accompanied by extenuating circumstances that increase the effects of pilots' decisions, such as bad weather and mechanical failure. **In these instances, the situation might be recoverable, meaning that a pilot could have reacted differently** and recovered the flight from crashing, but, for whatever reason, the decision a pilot made caused the situation to worsen and led to a crash.

## Time to try (cont. 2)...

Write 1-2 sentences summarizing the main point of the paragraph below for the thesis “**Domestic pilots should be better trained for reacting to unexpected situations.**”

- representing the primary cause with an average of 53% from 1950-2010
- pilot error...rarely is the sole cause
- In these instances, the situation might be recoverable, meaning that a pilot could have reacted differently

## Time to try (cont. 3)...

Write 1-2 sentences summarizing the main point of the paragraph below for the thesis **“Domestic pilots should be better trained for reacting to unexpected situations.”**

- representing the primary cause with an average of 53% from 1950-2010
- pilot error...rarely is the sole cause
- In these instances, the situation might be recoverable, meaning that a pilot could have reacted differently

While pilot error represents the most common cause of aircraft crashes at 53% in the latter half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many issues can combine with a pilot's training to affect his response to a situation. Therefore, increased training for domestic pilots regarding factors that can affect a flight's safety is a step toward decreasing this statistic.

## Time to try (cont. 4)...

Write 1-2 sentences summarizing the main point of the paragraph below for the thesis **“Universities have a responsibility to ensure students attend classes rather than making attendance optional.”**

Studies have shown that students who attend class regularly and have fewer than 3 absences per class in a semester have a higher success rate in upper-level courses. Researchers believe that this is the result of increased confidence as a consequence of working with the course’s material on a regular basis; while this might be true, others argue that many other factors can influence a student’s success, such as economic situations, family support, and overall learning abilities. It is not clear to what extent these aspects impact a student’s success, and further research is needed to clarify their roles. What is clear, however, is that the tie between a student’s grade and his or her attendance in a class over a semester is a supported tool for universities to encourage greater student success.

## Time to try (cont. 5)...

Write 1-2 sentences summarizing the main point of the paragraph below for the thesis **“Universities have a responsibility to ensure students attend classes rather than making attendance optional.”**

Studies have shown that students who attend class regularly and have fewer than 3 absences per class in a semester have a higher success rate in upper-level courses. Researchers believe that this is the result of increased confidence as a consequence of working with the course’s material on a regular basis; while this might be true, others argue that many other factors can influence a student’s success, such as economic situations, family support, and overall learning abilities. It is not clear to what extent these aspects impact a student’s success, and further research is needed to clarify their roles. What is clear, however, is that **the tie between a student’s grade and his or her attendance in a class over a semester is a supported tool for universities to encourage greater student success.**

## Time to try (cont. 6)...

Write 1-2 sentences summarizing the main point of the paragraph below for the thesis **“Universities have a responsibility to ensure students attend classes rather than making attendance optional.”**

- Studies have shown that students who attend class regularly and have fewer than 3 absences per class in a semester have a higher success rate in upper-level courses
- this is the result of increased confidence as a consequence of working with the course’s material on a regular basis
- the tie between a student’s grade and his or her attendance in a class over a semester is a supported tool for universities to encourage greater student success.



## Time to try (cont. 7)...

Write 1-2 sentences summarizing the main point of the paragraph below for the thesis **“Universities have a responsibility to ensure students attend classes rather than making attendance optional.”**

- Studies have shown that students who attend class regularly and have fewer than 3 absences per class in a semester have a higher success rate in upper-level courses
- this is the result of increased confidence as a consequence of working with the course’s material on a regular basis
- the tie between a student’s grade and his or her attendance in a class over a semester is a supported tool for universities to encourage greater student success.

Research has shown that there is a correlation between students’ class attendance and their success in a given class, which is thought to be the consequence of more familiarity with course material leading to greater confidence. While there might be other influencing factors, this fact supports the idea that universities have a responsibility to ensure student success by enforcing mandatory attendance in the hopes of increasing student success.

# Create your own summary...

Thesis: “A large amount of threats to endangered animals come from the intrusion of humans on such animals’ lifestyles.”

Despite giant pandas being the feature attraction of zoos around the world—bringing joy to millions of visitors each year—and despite the birth of a panda cub in captivity always being headline news, the survival of giant pandas in the wild is highly uncertain. While pandas living in zoo environments are thriving, giant pandas living in the wild are facing many threats to their continued survival. The situation is so perilous that there is a real risk that giant pandas could become extinct in the wild. Large-scale, destructive development, mining operations and mass tourism have all led to the widespread loss, degradation and fragmentation of panda habitat. Combined with the impacts of climate change and natural disasters such as the catastrophic May 2008 Sichuan earthquake, wild panda populations are in trouble. Wild Giant Pandas are found only in a number of relatively small areas within China. China has the largest human population of any country in the world, and the expansion of areas used by humans can inevitably mean that less space is available for Pandas. The lifecycle of the Pandas' principal source of food, the bamboo plant, means that Pandas need to be able to move from area to area over time. This means that a much larger territory is required to support a wild Giant Panda than many other animals. Furthermore, the breeding season for Pandas is limited to only a few days a year, at which time male Pandas will seek a female to mate with. Adult Pandas will typically spend most of the rest of the year alone. Like many large mammals the female Panda will give birth to only 1 or 2 offspring, which are very small and defenseless at birth. In the wild however, where two cubs are born the mother will usually raise only one and abandon the other. In captivity, humans can help to save both offspring by rotating them so that the mother looks after each one in turn. Finally, although efforts have been made to prevent the hunting of Pandas in China, they can still be killed by poachers or in traps intended for other animals.

# Create your own summary (cont.)...

Thesis: “A large amount of threats to endangered animals come from the intrusion of humans and reversing this relationship can help endangered species grow.”

Despite giant pandas being the feature attraction of zoos around the world—bringing joy to millions of visitors each year—and despite the birth of a panda cub in captivity always being headline news, the survival of giant pandas in the wild is highly uncertain. While pandas living in zoo environments are thriving, giant pandas living in the wild are facing many threats to their continued survival. The situation is so perilous that there is a real risk that giant pandas could become extinct in the wild. **Large-scale, destructive development, mining operations and mass tourism have all led to the widespread loss, degradation and fragmentation of panda habitat.** Combined with the impacts of climate change and natural disasters such as the catastrophic May 2008 Sichuan earthquake, wild panda populations are in trouble. Wild Giant Pandas are found only in a number of relatively small areas within China. China has the largest human population of any country in the world, and the **expansion of areas used by humans can inevitably mean that less space is available for Pandas.** The lifecycle of the Pandas' principal source of food, the bamboo plant, means that Pandas need to be able to move from area to area over time. This **means that a much larger territory is required to support a wild Giant Panda than many other animals.** Furthermore, the breeding season for Pandas is limited to only a few days a year, at which time male Pandas will seek a female to mate with. Adult Pandas will typically spend most of the rest of the year alone. Like many large mammals the female Panda will give birth to only 1 or 2 offspring, which are very small and defenseless at birth. In the wild however, where two cubs are born the mother will usually raise only one and abandon the other. **In captivity, humans can help to save both offspring by rotating them so that the mother looks after each one in turn.** Finally, although efforts have been made to prevent the hunting of Pandas in China, **they can still be killed by poachers or in traps intended for other animals.**

# Create your own summary (cont. 2)...

Thesis: “A large amount of threats to endangered animals come from the intrusion of humans and reversing this relationship can help endangered species grow.”

- Large-scale, destructive development, mining operations and mass tourism have all led to the widespread loss, degradation and fragmentation of panda habitat
- expansion of areas used by humans can inevitably mean that less space is available for Pandas
- This means that a much larger territory is required to support a wild Giant Panda than many other animals
- In captivity, humans can help to save both offspring by rotating them so that the mother looks after each one in turn
- they can still be killed by poachers or in traps intended for other animals.

The Giant Panda has been greatly affected by human intrusion. The primary areas that have affected the species include a loss of habitat due to societal expansion and city development, a reduction of mating space as a result of increase human habitation, and an increase in deaths thanks to poachers and trappings in their native lands. Many of these aspects can be addressed with simple measures, such as accounting for Giant Pandas’ habitats when planning city development, increasing the fines and punishments for poachers, and aiding Giant Pandas’ breeding in captivity.