SUMMARIZING

Summarizing, like paraphrasing, is a technique used to obtain the essential part of an original source. In other words, it is a concise statement of the most important points taken from another text. It is a good technique to use when writing a research paper. Important things to remember when summarizing an article are the following:

- Read the text until the meaning or main idea of the passage is clear.
- Put the original text away to discourage any similarities between the summary and the source. Use your own words!
- Be concise. Use only the central points of the source, anything that is not relevant to the main point should not be considered.
- Avoid being repetitive.
- It helps to use a highlighter or red pen to indicate the most important points of the article.
- Juxtapose your summary with the original text. If they look the same then it’s not really a summary.

Summaries are good to use for research papers as a substitute for quoting or paraphrasing. Like a quote or paraphrase, a summary must also include the author of the original text; this should be introduced at the beginning of the summary. The proper MLA or APA citation for documenting sources should be used in the works cited or references page. Don’t plagiarize!

Example

Original Source

Unfortunately, many people don’t take notes effectively. Some try to write down everything a speaker says. They view note taking as a race, pitting their handwriting agility against the speaker’s rate of speech. As the speaker starts to talk, the note taker starts to write. But soon the speaker is winning the race. In a desperate effort to keep up, the note taker slips into a scribbled writing style with incomplete sentences and abbreviated words. Even this is not enough. The speaker pulls so far ahead that the note
taker can never catch up. Finally, the note taker concedes defeat and spends the rest of the speech grumbling in frustration.

The following is a sample summary of the above text:

**MLA Sample**

Ineffective note taking becomes a problem during a speech. Often it leads to confusion and writing verbatim what the speaker is stating. This may result in a lack of sufficient information recorded on page (Lucas, 69).

**APA Sample**

Ineffective note taking becomes a problem during a speech. Often it leads to confusion and writing verbatim what the speaker is stating. This may result in a lack of sufficient information recorded on page (Lucas, 1998).