

**The UNB Writing Centre**

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## Writing a Précis

### Content

A précis is a brief summary of another work, typically one-quarter the original length or less, though instructors requesting them may specify a length (e.g., a single page). Unlike a *review*, a précis should preserve the logic and emphasis of the original, without presenting an interpretation or judgment of the work. Most instructors emphasize that the wording, apart from key terms and names of processes, must be original; a précis does not normally include quotations. The focus is normally on the contribution the research makes to its field.

### Format

While some instructors may recommend using the standard IMRAD format (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion), others may specify the simpler IBC model (Introduction, Body, Conclusion).

### Purpose

Writing a précis demonstrates to the instructor that you have understood the key information provided in an article; it is also an excellent way of learning material. The process can also serve as a step in thesis/dissertation research; a *literature review* is effectively a series of précis combined to provide a comprehensive picture of research in a given area.

### Steps

1. Read the article(s) carefully, beginning with the abstract (itself a kind of précis).
2. Write brief notes on the key points, and identify the data crucial to the findings.
3. Expand and link the notes to produce a logical narrative.
4. Perform final editing to ensure the findings are emphasized and non-essential details have been cut.