

Précis Assignment: An Overview

What is a précis?: A **précis** is a summary or abstract of what you have read. In writing a précis, your own words are used to state the main thesis and describe important details of the reading. A well-written précis communicates clearly the essence of the content and tone of the original work in fewer words, and does not include your opinions about the speech.

Writing Task:

You will read the assigned speech multiple times and write a précis that conveys the main points that the speaker makes and how she/he makes them. The précis should be no more than one or two paragraphs that demonstrate your reading comprehension and ability to write and report clearly and succinctly about another person's writing or speech. The "Guided Précis Writing" below outlines reading and writing strategies that help in your writing a successful précis.

The final précis should:

- Introduce the speech—who, what, where and when—for which you are writing the précis.
- Include the main thesis and key ideas, leaving out minor details.
- Follow the logical order and development of the ideas in the speech.
- Be written in your own words as much as possible.
- Be clear and concise.
- Be free of your opinions, as well as any spelling, syntax and punctuation errors.
- Follow the style guidelines established for this course.

Guided Précis Writing:

1. Read the whole speech and get an overall sense of its main theme and general tone.
2. Read the speech a second time for full comprehension by:
 - a. Looking up in the dictionary any words that are unclear to you;
 - b. Underlining important facts and key ideas; and
 - c. Taking notes on each main point in the margins
3. Write in your own words the main thesis of the speech, then summarize the speech without adding your opinions or comments.
4. Read the summary and revise it to accurately summarize the speech.
5. Exchange your draft précis with that of another student to read and provide comments for helping each other finalize the writing.
6. Consider the comments on your draft and review the original speech and your notes on it, then update and finalize your précis.