

Taking Good Notes, continued

Summarizing

When you summarize an article or passage, you find and condense the most important ideas, leaving out most of the details. To summarize, follow these steps:

1 Read Your Source Carefully

To locate the most important ideas, look at titles, headings, and key words in *italics* or **bold** type. In an article or a longer passage, determine the main idea of each paragraph.

2 Keep Track of Important Ideas and Details

You can make notes in a graphic organizer to hold your thinking and then use it as a guide for your summary.

Main Idea: Animal hormones can be used to develop treatments for human diseases.

Detail: During the 1980s, Dr. Eng began studying the saliva of Gila monsters.

Or, if you have your own copy of the source, you can highlight ideas. Otherwise, try using sticky notes to mark key points.

The Gila's Healing Hormone

Tricia Fitzpatrick

During the 1980s, Dr. John Eng did extensive research on hormones in a laboratory in the Bronx in New York. Eng hoped to discover how animal hormones could be used to develop treatments for human diseases. Dr. Eng began studying the saliva of the Gila monster, a venomous lizard native to the Southwest, after hearing that people who had been bitten by the monster produced extra insulin. Through his research, Eng discovered that the Gila monster's saliva contains a hormone that is remarkably similar to a human hormone that triggers insulin release. Eng's discovery was used to create a new drug to treat Type II diabetes.

3 Restate the Main Idea in Your Own Words

Try to get it all into one sentence, if at all possible.

Dr. John Eng researched ways to use hormones from animals to treat human diseases.

4 Condense the Important Details and Examples

In your summary, you will not include every detail that is in the original—just the most important points. The length of your summary will vary depending on how long your source is.

Dr. Eng's Discovery

Dr. John Eng researched ways to use animal hormones to treat human diseases. After learning that the bite of a Gila monster raised people's insulin levels, he studied the Gila's saliva. A hormone in it resembles a human hormone that helps release insulin. Eng's discovery resulted in a new drug for diabetics.

Fitzpatrick, 70

Source: author's name and page number

Don't forget to add a heading telling what the summary is about, and to identify the source and page number(s).

5 Check for Accuracy

Once you've written your summary, read it over and compare it to the source material. Does your summary represent the source accurately? Are you sure you've captured the most important ideas? If necessary, revise your summary.

Taking Good Notes, continued

Using Direct Quotes

Usually it's best to paraphrase or summarize source material. However, including a few direct quotes can spice up your paper, especially if a writer's words are vivid or memorable.

New Treatments for Diabetes

Frederick Hikel, M.D.

Diabetics often take oral medications that are designed to lower blood-sugar levels. Unfortunately, sometimes these medications can be too effective, since they can lower blood-sugar levels to the point where the patient risks going into shock.

Keep these points in mind when you write down quotes:

- Record the exact words used in your source. If you need to add or change a word, either to make the meaning clear or to shorten or condense the quote, use square brackets [] to show where you made a change.

Diabetes—Medication

"Unfortunately, sometimes [older] medications can be too effective, since they can lower blood-sugar levels to the point where the patient risks going into shock."

- If you need to leave out part of a quotation, use ellipses [...] to show the omission. Make sure you don't alter the meaning!

Diabetes—Medication

"Unfortunately, sometimes these medications can . . . lower blood-sugar levels to the point where the patient risks going into shock."