
UNIT 6 WRITING SUMMARIES - II

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6.0 OBJECTIVE

After going through the unit you should be able to write summaries of the passages you read.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we took you through the process of summary writing. In this unit, we give you more examples. As we said earlier, it is only through practice that you will become good at summarizing texts. This will also help you to write concisely and with precision.

When you write a summary you need to remember the following points:

- i) Go through each part of the source information and note what is essential and important.
- ii) Decide whether some details are important as well.
- iii) Exclude unimportant details, examples, anecdotes, etc.
- iv) Write out the basic ideas as simply as possible, often rewording them.

Of course, some knowledge of grammar always comes in handy while writing summaries.

Again, we request you to go through the unit with us and attempt the intext questions. You will then gain confidence and write efficiently and well.

6.2 TECHNIQUES OF SUMMARIZING

Example 1

You are now going to read a passage on how agriculturists are learning to deal with creatures that harm crops. In recent years, there has been a growing use of insecticides, but the passage given below suggests that other ways of dealing with the harmful creatures or pests are being developed and successfully used. Now read the passage.

Integrated Pest Management

- 1) 1) Agricultural pests are winning the battle against the poisonous chemicals in pesticides. 2) As each new chemical pesticide is used, the insects or rodents gradually become used to it. 3) The pests change themselves so that they are not killed by the poison. 4) Therefore, farmers, scientists, and food planners are trying a new method to control the pests that attack their crops. 5) This method is called Integrated Pest Management, or IPM.

- 2) Integrated pest management is a plan that combines several different methods to destroy insects and rodents. These methods are specifically developed for individual areas and crops. The control methods include using the pests' natural enemies, controlling the pests' breeding environment and developing stronger strains of seeds. Chemical poisons are used only when necessary. The IPM method accepts the fact that it is useless to try to destroy pests completely with chemical poisons. Its aim is to control pest populations so that crops can still grow well.
- 3) Cotton farmers in Texas have been using the IPM method. The farmers find this the best combination of control methods for their needs. In this way, they can produce crops without using too many chemical poisons. In 1977, three-quarters of the cotton fields in Texas received no insecticides at all. That year's cotton crop was better than average. The IPM methods showed the farmers a better way to control the pests in their field.
- 4) The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been studying agricultural pests and chemicals. It has found that 223 pests are resistant to, or not affected by, insecticides. Rodents, including rats, are also gaining resistance to poisons. In 1965, another UN organisation, the UN food and Agricultural Organisation, listed 182 resistant types of pests. Three years later, there were 228 species on the resistant list. The 1977 survey raised the number to 364 species. Because so many pests are becoming resistant to chemical poisons, it is necessary to find another method of control. By using integrated pest management, farmers can still control and limit pests without depending on chemical poisons.

(From Zukowski-Faust, J. Johnston, S.S and Atkinson, C.S. *Between the lines*. Copyright © 1983 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., reprinted by permission of the publisher.)

We are now going to make a summary of the passage by looking for the important ideas in each paragraph.

Let us start with paragraph 1. Re-read this paragraph and find a line that states the main idea. Write down that here. It is now always possible to find the main idea started in a single sentence. Quite often it is to be put together from many different sentences. If the main idea can be found in one sentence that sentence is called a topic sentence.

Did you choose sentence 1 as your topic sentence?

'Agricultural pests are winning the battle against the poisonous chemicals in pesticides.'

Notice that sentence 2 merely explains the meaning of sentence 1. Sentence 3 gives a little more information about the same point. What about sentences 4 and 5? You can see that these provide a new point. The two sentences (4 and 5) can be combined to form:

'Therefore, farmers, scientists and food planners are trying a new method to control the pests that attack their crops, namely, Integrated Pest Management(IPM).'

What is the relationship between sentence 1 on the one hand and sentences 4 and 5 on the other hand? Write down the answer here, before looking ahead.

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Sentence 1 states the general position — the problem. Sentences 4 and 5 state the solution to this problem. Note that both the problem and the solution make up the topic of paragraph 1.

What is the relationship of the rest of the passage to these sentences? Rapidly look over paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 and state the nature of that relationship here, before looking ahead.

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The rest of the passage contain a development of the idea of Integrated Pest Management, what it consists of, how it is used, and its effect. It is therefore an expansion of the solution to the problem stated in paragraph 1.

Now, look for the important sentences in paragraph 2, which develop the main idea. Write them down here:

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Have you written down the following?

‘Integrated pest management is a plan that combines different methods to destroy insects and rodents. Its aim is to control pest populations so that crops can still grow well.

As you can see, the first and the last sentence of this paragraph have been chosen because these contain the main idea. However, is this information enough to summarise paragraph 2? If you look again, you will find that crucial items are left out. What are these? Go back to paragraph 2 and find out what other information is required to be stated. Write this down here:

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The points to be taken from paragraph 2 read thus:

‘Integrated pest management is a plan that combines several different methods to destroy insects and rodents. Its aim is to control populations so that crops can still grow well, by using the pests’ natural enemies, controlling the pests’ breeding environment, and developing stronger strains of seeds.’

Can you cut out any words from here? Write down what you can remove.

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Now check your answer.

- i) ‘Integrated Pest Management’ has already been mentioned in full in the sentence we have retained from paragraph 1. The same sentence also states its short form ‘IPM’ in brackets. Therefore, the next sentence to be included in the summary, i.e. from paragraph 2, needs not repeat ‘Integrated Pest Management’ in full. It can be referred to simply as ‘IPM.’

- ii) The word ‘pests’ is repeated in the summary of paragraph 2. We can therefore, change the second use of ‘the pests’ to ‘their’. The sentence will then read:

‘...by using the pests’ natural enemies, controlling their breeding environment.’

Now condense paragraph 3. Bear in mind what has already been stated in the summaries of paragraphs 1 and 2 above and choose only what seems to be necessary from paragraph 3 to continue the argument.

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Here is a hint: a specific example has been given here. This is too long to repeat. Choose only one aspect of the example to make the required point that the IPM method is successful. Write this down here if you have not already written it in the blank given above.

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Perhaps the most important part of the example is ‘The cotton crop in Texas in 1977 was better than average’. To produce this, part of two sentences have been combined. The other details are not required in a summary. Now read paragraph 4 and note down the main idea expressed in it. Don’t get confused by the details. Try and find the general point.

State it here.

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Have you noted down the following?

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‘The U.N. Environmental programme has found that a large number of pests are resistant to insecticides, so it is necessary to find another method of control.’

Notice that this sentence is drawn from different part of the paragraph. ‘The United Nations’ has been shortened to ‘the U.N.’ but not ‘UNEP’. The U.N. is a well-known organisation, so it will be recognised by its initials, but the Environment Programme run by the U.N. is not generally so well-known so it needs to be stated in full. A number of figures are given about the pests that have been studied and found to be resistant to insecticides. These cannot be stated separately but have to be contained within a generalisation: ‘a large number of pests.’ The second last sentence of the paragraph is the main sentence for the summary.

Now rewrite all the main points that we have put down separately together here:

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Let us now read this summary:

‘Agricultural pests are winning the battle against the poisonous chemicals in pesticides. Therefore farmers, scientists and food planners are trying a new method to control the pests that attack their crops, namely Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM is a plan that combines several different methods to destroy insects and rodents. Its aim is to control pest populations so that crops can still grow well, by using the pests’ natural enemies, controlling the pests’ breeding environment, and developing stronger strains of seeds. The cotton crop in Texas in 1977 was better than average. The UN Environment Programme has found that a large number of pests are resistant to insecticides, so it is necessary to find another method of control’.

Now consider this summary carefully.

- i) Are all the points connected to form a single argument? And are all the sentences properly linked? If you read carefully you will find that one of the sentences has no proper linking word to connect it to the previous sentence. Which sentence is this? What linking words would you add? Answer these questions here before reading ahead.

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- ii) The last sentence but one is not related to the previous one. It is necessary to add something else such as. 'As the result of using the IPM, the cotton crop in Texas in 1977 was better than average'. By the addition of these words a reason is given for the improvement of the cotton crop.
- iii) Is there any repetition of ideas anywhere in this summary? Write down the sentences that repeat the same information.

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You will have noticed that the first and last lines of this summary repeat the same idea. Perhaps, it is possible to cut out one of the lines. The last sentence can very easily be removed because mention of the UN Environmental programme is not particularly important to the development of the argument. So the summary is complete without the last sentence.

Let us go over the steps we look to write this summary.

- i) We isolated the main point or points in each paragraph.
- ii) We then checked if any crucial ideas were left out.
- iii) We then put them all together as a summary.
- iv) And finally, we looked at the summary to check for repetition of ideas and removed the repetition. The summary also checked connection between one of the examples and the main idea. In that case, linking or connecting words were required in order to make it read properly. You must follow these steps when writing a summary.

Example 2

You will now read another passage. This deals with a related topic. It talks about natural ways of fertilizing the soil. The method suggested here is the use of earthworms to freshen the soil. Now read the passage.

Earthworms back in the garden

- 1) 'Earthworms are the answer for every garden problem, according to Harold John Weigel. They can increase crop production, turn and freshen soil, and produce faster growth. Simply take care of the earthworms, and the earthworms will take care of the garden. Weigel is extremely enthusiastic about earthworms. They are tremendous creatures, "the intestines of the Earth," Weigel says quoting Charles Darwin.
- 2) Weigel is so excited about the benefits of worms that he is writing a book about them. He gardens using thousands of earthworms. He has persuaded his wife to put worms in her houseplant pots. He even suggests eating worms, which he claims, are 70 per cent protein. He has dreams of armies of earthworms helping to replace topsoil in the

country. It is a fact, he says, that topsoil is disappearing every year through erosion. Wind and water carry away the soil and nature needs centuries to replace it.

- 3) Within one year, one thousand earthworms and their descendants can change approximately one ton of organic matter into one of the higher yield growing materials known, according to Weigel. Worms eat organic material and produce what is known as worm castings. If 1,000 pounds of earthworms are working on one acre of land every twenty-four hours, they will produce 1,000 pounds of castings that function as high-grade topsoil. They produce the same amount of topsoil in one day that nature could produce in 700 years through decomposition and erosive forces such as wind and rain.
- 4) Planting garden in worm castings offers plants more than just all the necessary nutrients. For example, casting are very porous, and water flows easily through them. They are very absorbant, being able to hold water easily. In addition, worms tend to be happiest around the roots of plants. Water can then flow directly to roots through the worm channels. The worms' create a planting area of even consistency. Thus, the earthworms act as natural ploughs.
- 5) Worms offer all these benefits, yet they make few demands. They need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil. Wiegel gets his information on the benefits of earthworms from books and from the Worm Growers Association. That little-known group, which is active in many states, suggests that commercial farmers reintroduce earthworms in place where they have been killed through the use of synthetic fertilizers and other gardening chemicals.'

(From Zukowski-Faust, J. Johnson, S.S and Atkinson, C.S. *Between the Lines*, Copyright © 1983 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., reprinted by permission of the publisher.)

Check Your Progress

- 1) Re-read paragraph 1 and draw out the main idea from it. You can begin in this way:
 'Earthworms are the answer for every garden problem.'

(Check your answer with that given by us at the end of the unit.)

You were expected to complete the above sentence by giving examples of the problems earthworm could solve, as listed in paragraph 1. Notice that the punctuation mark, the colon, in the answer given by us, indicates that an explanation or details regarding something is going to follow.

- 2) Now re-read paragraph 2 and draw out the main ideas from it. You will find that it contains two ideas. Write them down here.

Check your answer with those given at the end of the unit. The paragraph is about the benefits of worms and the two benefits mentioned here should be selected for the summary. If you have chosen anything else, it can only be about Weigel's excitement and the usefulness of worms in general. In a summary we are not much concerned with the view of an individual such as Weigel, but with the facts themselves. The usefulness of worms in general has already been stated in the summary of paragraph 1, so that doesn't need to be repeated.

- 3) Now re-read paragraph 3 and note down the main points. Choose the most general statements. Specific examples should not be included unless they also express a general idea, which has not already been stated. Write down your points here.

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Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit. You will find that a large part of the first and the last sentence expresses the main points. All reference to Weigel are left out. The point regarding worm castings, though important, is not really necessary for the main argument that runs through whole piece.

- 4) Now read paragraph 4, just select those points that have not already been stated. Choose adjectives and adjective-like phrases that are used to describe the effect of worms on the soil. You can begin your sentence this way;

‘Worms make the soil
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It is not necessary to give all the details even though they are interesting. In a summary you need basically to provide the main points that are important for the whole passage. Check your answer with that given by us.

- 5) Now read paragraph 5 and note down the main points. You will notice that this paragraph deals with the needs of worms. So, first state the three things that they need, starting with the words:

Worms need only
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Another point is also being made here regarding a Worm Growers’ Association, which is of interest in the context. This could also be mentioned. Put in a line about this.

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Check your answer with that given by us.

- 6) Now, if the whole summary we have produced is written up, it will read like this:

‘Earthworms are the answer for every garden problem: they can increase crop production, turn and freshen soil and produce faster growth. Earthworms, it is claimed, are 70 per cent protein, so they can be eaten. They can replace the topsoil, which is disappearing every year through erosion. Within one year, 1,000 earthworms and their descendants can change approximately 1 ton of organic matter into one of the highest-yield growing materials known. They produce the same amount of topsoil in one day that nature could produce in 700 years through decomposition and erosive forces. Worms make the soil porous, absorbent and of even consistency. Worms need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil. A Worm Growers’ Association is active in many states.’

Let us look at the summary carefully now to see if any changes are required in order to make it read like a connected passage. The first part all the way upto’ ... and of even consistency’, is concerned with the function of earthworms. Each point that is being made up to this stage consists of a statement of yet another function of the earthworms, so no further connecting words are required.

However, the sentence ‘Worms need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil’ is concerned not with the function of worms but with the need of these worms. It is, therefore necessary to indicate that a different kind of idea is being brought in. A line from the original passage can be used in order to connect this sentence with the rest of the summary. Let us see how the summary will read with this addition:

‘... Worms make the soil porous, absorbent and of even consistency. Worms offer all these benefits. Yet they make few demands: they need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil.’

Notice that the addition of this line indicates very clearly what the passage has dealt with so far and the contrast with what it is going to deal with next. What about the last sentence of the summary? Does it fit in at that point in the summary? There is actually no connection between that and the sentence before it. It may perhaps be preferable to drop the mention of the Worm Growers' Association.

Notice that the summary does not necessarily follow the sequence of ideas of the original passage. It may follow the same sequence or it may not. What is important is that a clear line of argument develops, even though in the original passage the line of argument is not so clear.

Now rewrite the final version of the summary here. Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

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- 7) You are now going to read a passage about antiseptics and write a summary after you have identified the ideas in each paragraph.

Antiseptic is a substance that destroys or stops the growth of germs on living tissue. Antiseptics are applied to the skin and mucous membranes to help prevent infection. They must be strong enough to fight germs but mild enough not to irritate sensitive tissues. Antiseptics differ from disinfectants and antibiotics. Disinfectants are chemicals that destroy germs on nonliving objects, and antibiotics are drugs that treat infection after it occurs.

There are hundred of antiseptic products, including creams, mouthwashes, ointments, powders, shampoos, soaps, solution, and sprays. Each of these products contains a germ- fighting chemical that carries out the antiseptic action. Such chemicals include alcohols, dyes, iodophors, mercurials, phenols, and salicylamides. The kind and amount of chemical used depends chiefly on the type of the product.

Physicians use special antiseptic cleansers to scrub their hands and to wash the patient’s skin before surgery. Doctors also spray serious wounds with antiseptics in order to keep them from becoming infected.

Antiseptics are used in first-aid treatment of cuts and other wounds, but many physicians and health experts question their use in such cases. These authorities believe washing such injuries with soap and warm water is as effective as any

Study Skills

antiseptic that can be bought without a prescription. An injury that requires more care should be treated by a physician.

The germ-fighting chemicals can cause serious side effects. These effects include a rash or some other allergic reaction, or damage to the skin. But medical experts generally believe antiseptics are safe if used as directed by the manufacturer.

People used vinegar and wine as antiseptics 2,500 years ago, long before the discovery that germs cause disease. Several hundred years ago, surgeons noticed that untreated battle wounds and surgical incisions quickly began to smell like rotting flesh. To prevent this odour, they treated the tissues with a variety of substances that became known as antiseptics. The word comes from two Greek words *anti*, meaning *against*, and *sepsis*, meaning *decay*. Through the centuries, a number of fluids and potions, were used as antiseptics. In addition to vinegar and wine, they included brandy, mercury, pitch, tar and turpentine. Some of these substances were powerful germ killers but also harmed the tissue. As a result, many patients were saved from infection but died from the treatment.

In the mid-1800's Ignaz P. Semmelweis, a Hungarian physician, showed that a mild solution of lime chloride helped prevent infection during childbirth. Doctors who rinsed their hands in the solution kept infection from spreading among the patients. Also in the mid 1860's, Sir Joseph Lister, an English surgeon, pioneered the use of antiseptics in surgery. He used carbolic acid in sprays and on dressings to help prevent infection in surgical incisions. The discoveries of Semmelweis and Lister led to the development of many mild but effective antiseptics. Some of these products, such as alcohol and iodine, are still widely used today.

(From *The World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol, World Book Inc,1983)

Did you identify the following ideas from the different paragraphs?

- Paragraph 1 What is an antiseptic? How is it different from disinfectants and antibiotics
- Paragraph 2 The different kinds of antiseptics
- Paragraph 3 & 4 The uses of antiseptics.
- Paragraph 5 & 6 Antiseptics in earlier ages.
- Paragraph 7 The contribution of Semmelweis and Lister.

Now write a summary in which you can use these ideas. Remember you can combine ideas and sentence and need not write in the order the paragraphs are arranged.

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Check your answer with that given by us.

Every summary has a purpose. We have been attempting general summaries where passages have been condensed according to the purpose of the passage itself. But they

can be summarised from the reader's point of view as well. In that case, details not so important to the passage might be selected because the reader happens to be particularly interested in them.

6.3 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have shown you we can write summaries of the passage we read by:

- looking for the important ideas in each passage and the relationship between them; and
- adopting a proper arrangement for the main points in the summary and linking the various sentences in it with the use of connectives.

6.4 KEY WORDS

Colon	: A mark (:) used in writing to introduce an example, etc.
Earthworm	: A common kind of long thin worm which lives in the soil.
Sequence	: The order in which things follow one another.

6.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) Earthworms are the answer for every garden problem: they can increase crop production, turn and freshen soil and produce faster growth.
- 2) Earthworms it is claimed are 70 per cent protein, so they can be eaten. They can replace topsoil which is disappearing every year through erosion.
- 3) Within one year, 1000 earthworms and their descendants can change approximately 1 ton of organic matter into one of the highest-yield growing materials known. They produce the same amount of topsoil in one day that nature could produce in 700 years through decomposition and erosive forces.
- 4) Worms make the soil porous, absorbent and of even consistency.
- 5) Worms need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil. A Worm Grower's Association is active in many states.
- 6) Earthworms are the answer for every garden problem: they can increase crop production, turn and freshen soil and produce faster growth. Earthworms, it is claimed, are 70 per cent protein, so they can be eaten. They can replace topsoil which is disappearing every year through erosion. Within one year, 1000 earthworms and their descendants can change approximately 1 ton of organic matter into one of the highest-yield growing materials known. They produce the same amount of topsoil in one day that nature could produce in 700 years through decomposition and erosive forces. Worms make the soil porous, absorbent and of even consistency. Worms offer all these benefits, yet they make few demands: they need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil.
- 7) (This summary is suggestive, your summary may be differently arranged but do include the main ideas identified in the different paragraphs.)

The word antiseptic comes from two Greek words and means "against decay." Antiseptic stops the growth of germs on living tissue. It is different from disinfectants and antibiotics. Doctors use different kinds of antiseptics for different purposes. In earlier times vinegar and wine were widely used as antiseptic. In the 1800's Semmelweis and Sir Joseph Lister used antiseptics with great effectiveness.