

Handouts

Teaching Expository and Persuasive Texts Gateway Resource TEPT0002

Elements of an Expository Text Summary

Note: *Writing a summary of an expository text is an authentic writing task that follows the reading of the text. An effective summary of an expository text is an accurate, concise restatement of the text's main ideas and important details. A summary should be paraphrased or written in one's own words—not copied verbatim from the original text.*

1. **Begins with a clear and concise topic sentence that reflects the overall meaning of the original text.** A summary of an expository text typically opens with a topic sentence that explains what the text is about and suggests the contents of the summary. A summary usually does not begin with a traditional introduction.
2. **Includes all the main ideas and important supporting details in the body of the summary.** A summary of an expository text distinguishes the important from the less important information in the text.
3. **Does not repeat any information.** A standard conclusion is not needed in a summary of an expository text.
4. **Does not include any trivial or unimportant information.**
5. **Uses purposeful and precise words to suggest a category, rather than listing all the examples or details in the original text.** For example, if writing about sports, use the word *exercising*, instead of listing all the different actions, such as biking, jogging, and weightlifting. Or use the word *equipment*, rather than listing all the exercise items, such as a bike, running shoes, mats, and weights.

Source: Pasquarelli, S. L. (2006). Expository summary writing. In S. L. Pasquarelli (Ed.), *Teaching writing genres across the curriculum: Strategies for middle school teachers* (pp. 105–119). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Expository Text Summary Mini-Chart

- Begins with a clear and concise topic sentence that reflects the overall meaning of the original text
- Includes all the main ideas and important supporting details in the body of the summary
- Does not repeat any information
- Does not include any trivial or unimportant information
- Uses purposeful and precise words to suggest a category, rather than listing all the examples or details in the original text

Introducing the Elements of Expository Text Summaries

Expository Mentor Text

During the era of the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, doctors believed in the healing powers of nature—the body would heal itself by getting rid of toxins or poisons. The doctor’s job was to help the body along with the process.

Most of the medical treatment was very gentle. Herbal teas were used to break low-grade fevers. A glass of brandy was prescribed to help a patient go to sleep.

Other symptoms required slightly more extreme measures. Bloodletting, or phlebotomy, was one of these procedures. Doctors would open a vein with a lance and draw off a small amount of blood into a bowl. They believed that with less blood in the ailing person’s body, the remaining blood would be able to flow more freely and normally.

Bloodletting, an ancient and trusted medical practice, was in use for more than 2,500 years. It was used to relieve headaches, depression, disease, and anxiety. It was even used with broken bones. Yellow fever also called for this form of treatment.

Model Summary

In 1793, doctors believed in the healing power of nature. They used gentle procedures, such as teas and brandy. They also used more drastic procedures, such as phlebotomy, or bloodletting, which was an ancient medical practice. During this procedure, doctors would drain a small amount of the ill person’s blood to hopefully make the remaining blood flow more freely. Bloodletting was used for a variety of illnesses, including yellow fever.

Annotated Model Summary

In 1793, doctors believed in the healing power of nature [*paraphrased topic sentence from original text*]. They used gentle procedures, such as teas and brandy [*main idea 1*]. They also used more drastic procedures, such as phlebotomy, or bloodletting [*main idea 2*], which was an ancient medical practice [*important detail*]. During this procedure, doctors would drain a small amount of the ill person’s blood to hopefully make the remaining blood flow more freely [*important detail*]. Bloodletting was used for a variety of illnesses [*reduced list of other illnesses to a category: “variety”*], including yellow fever [*important detail*].

Sources:

Murphy, J. (2003). *An American plague: The true and terrifying story of the yellow fever epidemic of 1793*. New York, NY: Clarion.

Pasquarelli, S. L. (2006). Expository summary writing. In S. L. Pasquarelli (Ed.), *Teaching writing genres across the curriculum: Strategies for middle school teachers* (pp. 105–119). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Sample Expository Text Structures

Note: The following texts are adapted from the Whales Online website, which is no longer active.

Concept and Definition

Living in Waters of Trouble

Cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises) live in a marine environment that is threatened by many outside factors. One of the threats is change in climate. Within polar regions, melting ice causes ocean currents to change that can trigger a domino effect, such as temperature change, which will, in turn, change the marine ecosystem. Another threat to cetaceans is habitat loss caused by rising sea levels from climate and temperature change.

In addition to natural changes, pollutants affect cetaceans. One type, chemical pollution caused by oil spills and industrial waste, are toxins to whales, dolphins, and porpoises. Another type of pollution that affects marine life is hard waste pollution. It has often been documented that coastal dolphins become tangled in fishing nets, plastic bags, fishing line, and offshore nets. This hard waste pollution can kill or disfigure these animals.

Lastly, another danger to marine life is the fishing industry. Fishing driftnets are still used around the world. These driftnets are made from rope that whales and dolphins do not easily detect. Many swim into these nets and are killed.

Sequence

Snapshot Oil Spill History

Several of the worst oil spills in marine history have occurred in recent times. In 1997, three oil spills in Asia affected shellfish and beaches. On January 7, in Japan, a Russian tanker leaked 5,200 tons of heavy fuel oil on beaches and threatened shellfish beds. On July 2, also in Japan, a tanker leaked 1,500 tons of crude oil onto a fishing ground famous for its seafood. Lastly, on October 15, 1997, a huge tanker carrying 120,000 tons of fuel leaked and coated several smaller islands off Singapore.

From 1998 to 1999, there were three significant oil spills in Nigeria and Australia. On January 12, 1998, the largest oil spill in Nigeria (40,000 barrels) threatened fish and destroyed fishing nests. In 1999, Australia was affected by two significant spills. The first spill, on June 28, occurred when a faulty pipe coupling caused 270,000 liters of crude oil to spill, damaging beaches and killing marine life. The second occurred on August 3, when an oil ship was unloading and a breach caused 80,000 liters of light crude oil to leak.

Compare and Contrast

Chemical and Nutrient Pollution

Many types of pollution affect whales, dolphins, and porpoises. The differences between noise pollution and chemical pollution are vast, but they have similar effects on these marine animals.

Chemical pollution may cause disease and destroy food supplies and natural habitats. Some chemicals are so toxic that they may even cause death. Chemical pollutants hurt marine animals by accumulating in the body tissue while they are feeding and are passed on through mother's milk. Most affected are those who are found along coastlines and feed on other animals in the food chain that may also have been affected by the chemical pollution.

Noise Pollution

Noise pollution in the form of underwater blasts from military sonar or seismic testing can travel more than 100 kilometers. These loud noises are more damaging to whales, porpoises, and dolphins than previously thought. Research suggests that seismic blasts can kill marine animals that are too close. In addition, some blasts have been documented to cause lung and sinus hemorrhages, disease, or maybe even death of the marine animal. Perhaps the most documented detriment of noise pollution is the interruption of the marine animal's sonar capabilities. This interference threatens the marine animals' survival. Although noise and chemical pollution are very different, they are similar in nature because both harm the health and well being of cetaceans.

Cause and Effect

Chemical and Nutrient Pollution

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Problem and Solution

Internationally Recognized Spill Cleanup Solutions

There are four solutions that environmentalists typically try when an oil spill occurs. One solution is called the "monitor-only" approach. This solution is, at the moment, considered "best practice" only when the water is deep and the location is considered remote. Another solution to contain oil spills is called the "mechanical containment" approach. In this approach, cleanup crews use booms and skimmers to contain the oil. This solution only works when the spill is small and seas are calm. A third solution is the "insitu burning oil" approach. This solution is considered dangerous because as the oil is set on fire, it creates substantial toxic air pollution. Lastly, for shoreline spills, environmentalists use the "shoreline cleanup" approach, in which they mechanically remove oily sand from beaches and shorelines.

Source: Pasquarelli, S. L. (2006). Expository summary writing. In S. L. Pasquarelli (Ed.), *Teaching writing genres across the curriculum: Strategies for middle school teachers* (pp. 105–119). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Common Text Structures

Text structures, also known as organizational patterns, are the way a writer organizes and presents information. Key words differentiate and characterize each structure and serve as signals to help identify the structure. Authors may use more than one structure within a text. Learning how to identify a text's structure aids comprehension and locating and recording main ideas and important details.

| Text Structure | Key Words | Examples of Content Area Writing |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Concept and Definition The writer describes or explains a topic or phenomenon by listing unique characteristics, features, and examples.</p> | <p>for example, involves, can be, defined, for instance, also, within, contain, make up</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a detailed definition of <i>democracy</i>. • What is figurative language? |
| <p>Sequence The writer either tells the reader how to do something (step-by-step) or describes how something is done or happened.</p> | <p>to begin with, first, second, in addition, next, then, last, finally, another, also, earlier, later, now before, after, following, while, meanwhile, during, not long, when, on (date)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a science lab report. • Explain how to solve a complex, multistep math problem. • Provide a chronological account of the events. |
| <p>Compare and Contrast The writer explains the similarities and differences between at least two objects or ideas. The purpose is to develop the relationship between them and, in the process, explain both in detail.</p> | <p>different from, same as, alike, like, similar to, unlike, as well as, yet, either . . . or, not only . . . but also, compared to, in contrast, while, resembles, although, most, however, on the other hand, opposite, opposed to, similarly</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast a trapezoid and a parallelogram. • Compare and contrast Oedipus and Creon as leaders. • Compare and contrast the major elements in Christianity and Buddhism. |
| <p>Cause and Effect The writer presents a reason or motive for an event, situation, or trend and then explains its result or consequence.</p> | <p>because, so that, thus, unless, therefore, as a result of, led to, then, reasons for, then . . . so, for this reason, consequently, an explanation for, this reason, nevertheless, thus, accordingly</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how Descartes' discovery of the coordinate plane changed mathematics. • How and why do plants grow? • How and why do totalitarian governments form? |

| Text Structure | Key Words | Examples of Content Area Writing |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Problem and Solution</p> <p>The writer states a problem and lists one or more solutions for the problem. A variation of this pattern is the question-and-answer format, in which the author poses a question and then answers it.</p> | <p>a problem is, a solution is, solved by, an alternative, possible answer, issue, therefore, conclusion, evidence is, a reason for</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What should be done about global warming?• How can the Federal Reserve keep economic crises from spinning out of control? |

Sources:

Stempel, A. R. (2010). *An introduction to analytical text structures*. Retrieved from <http://www.adlit.org/article/39554>

Teach for America. (2011). *Secondary literacy*. Retrieved from http://teachingasleadership.org/sites/default/files/Related-Readings/SL_2011.pdf

Common Text Structures: Student Version

Text structures, also known as organizational patterns, are the way a writer organizes and presents information. Key words differentiate and characterize each structure and serve as signals to help identify the structure. Authors may use more than one structure within a text. Learning how to identify a text's structure aids comprehension and locating and recording main ideas and important details.

| Text Structure | Key Words |
|--|--|
| Concept and Definition The writer describes or explains a topic or phenomenon by listing unique characteristics, features, and examples. | for example, involves, can be, defined, for instance, also, within, contain, make up |
| Sequence The writer either tells the reader how to do something (step-by-step) or describes how something is done or happened. | to begin with, first, second, in addition, next, then, last, finally, another, also, earlier, later, now before, after, following, while, meanwhile, during, not long, when, on (date) |
| Compare and Contrast The writer explains the similarities and differences between at least two objects or ideas. The purpose is to develop the relationship between them and, in the process, explain both in detail. | different from, same as, alike, like, similar to, unlike, as well as, yet, either . . . or, not only . . . but also, compared to, in contrast, while, resembles, although, most, however, on the other hand, opposite, opposed to, similarly |
| Cause and Effect The writer presents a reason or motive for an event, situation, or trend and then explains its result or consequence. | because, so that, thus, unless, therefore, as a result of, led to, then, reasons for, then . . . so, for this reason, consequently, an explanation for, this reason, nevertheless, thus, accordingly |
| Problem and Solution The writer states a problem and lists one or more solutions for the problem. A variation of this pattern is the question-and-answer format, in which the author poses a question and then answers it. | a problem is, a solution is, solved by, an alternative, possible answer, issue, therefore, conclusion, evidence is, a reason for |

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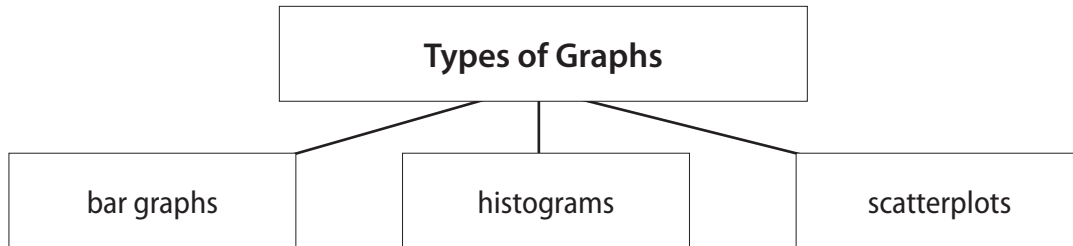
Guidelines for Writing Expository Text Summaries

1. Carefully read the text.
2. Determine the topic.
3. Identify the text structure (how the author arranged the ideas)—concept and definition, sequence, compare and contrast, cause and effect, and/or problem and solution.
Look for key words or signal words that indicate how the text is organized.
If the author uses more than one text structure, select the one that applies to how most of the main ideas are presented.
4. Draw or select an appropriate graphic organizer to match the text structure.
5. Record the most important information (main ideas and important details) in the graphic organizer.
6. Begin the summary by writing a topic sentence.
Reread the first part of the original text. Look for one or two sentences that state the thesis, or what the text is about. Then, paraphrase that part in your own words. Do not copy from the original text.
7. Use the main ideas and important details recorded in the graphic organizer as a guide to write the body of the summary.
Write in complete sentences. Use a variety of sentence patterns, including simple, compound, and complex. Vary sentence beginnings—start sentences with an adverb, a phrase (prepositional, participial, or infinitive), or an introductory clause. Break up long, rambling sentences (often run-on sentences) into two or three shorter sentences.
Use a verb or noun that suggests a general category for specific verbs or nouns individually listed in the original text.
8. Revise your draft by doing the following:
 - Locating and deleting trivial information
 - Locating and deleting repeated information
 - Checking that your topic sentence describes the overall meaning of the original text
9. Edit your draft for grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
10. Produce a final draft of your summary.

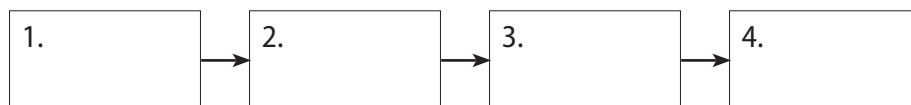
Source: Pasquarelli, S. L. (2006). Expository summary writing. In S. L. Pasquarelli (Ed.), *Teaching writing genres across the curriculum: Strategies for middle school teachers* (pp. 105–119). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Example Graphic Organizers for Expository Text Structures

Concept and Definition



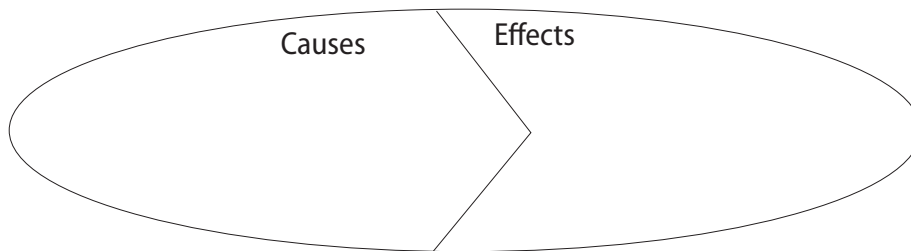
Sequence



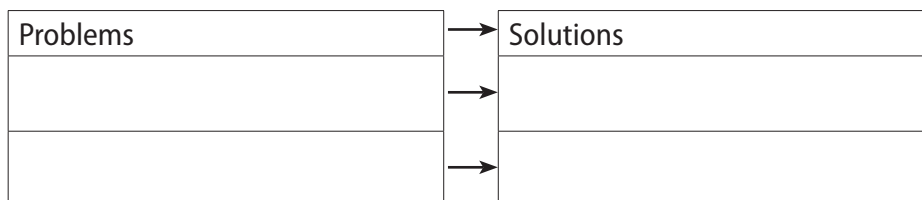
Compare and Contrast

| | Size | Composition | Orbit |
|---------|------|-------------|-------|
| Mars | | | |
| Jupiter | | | |

Cause and Effect



Problem and Solution



Source: Pasquarelli, S. L. (2006). Expository summary writing. In S. L. Pasquarelli (Ed.), *Teaching writing genres across the curriculum: Strategies for middle school teachers* (pp. 105–119). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Sample Lesson: Writing an Expository Summary

Objective

Students will learn how to write a summary of an expository text after watching the teacher model the process.

Materials

- Expository text
- Wall chart of text structures and patterns

Part 1: Reading and Identifying Text Structure

Opening

Teacher: Today we will learn how to write summaries of expository texts. Writing summaries helps us develop a better understanding of the materials we read and helps us remember and recall the material. First, I will read the entire article aloud. Please follow along on your copy.

Snapshot Oil Spill History

Several of the worst oil spills in marine history have occurred in recent times. In 1997, three oil spills in Asia affected shellfish and beaches. On January 7, in Japan, a Russian tanker leaked 5,200 tons of heavy fuel oil on beaches and threatened shellfish beds. On July 2, also in Japan, a tanker leaked 1,500 tons of crude oil onto a fishing ground famous for its seafood. Lastly, on October 15, 1997, a huge tanker carrying 120,000 tons of fuel leaked and coated several smaller islands off Singapore.

From 1998 to 1999, there were three significant oil spills in Nigeria and Australia. On January 12, 1998, the largest oil spill in Nigeria (40,000 barrels) threatened fish and destroyed fishing nests. In 1999, Australia was affected by two significant spills. The first spill, on June 28, occurred when a faulty pipe coupling caused 270,000 liters of crude oil to spill, damaging beaches and killing marine life. The second occurred on August 3, when an oil ship was unloading and a breach caused 80,000 liters of light crude oil to leak.

— Adapted from Whales Online

Instruction

Teacher: The first thing I do is figure out the structure, or organizational pattern. Identifying the structure will help me determine the most important parts and help me structure my summary.

Take a moment to look at the wall chart to refresh your memory of the different expository text structures. Then, look back at the sample text we just read.

Teacher pauses for students to look at text and wall chart.

Teacher: What did you notice about the text?

Student: One of the first things I noticed is that there are specific dates and other time words. I think this is a feature of sequence text structures.

Teacher: Good! Let's read the wall chart for sequence text. Who can read the first item?

Student: The writer lists items or events in numerical or chronological order.

Teacher: Good. Who wants to share what they are thinking about the sample text and the text structure?

Student: I think this definitely describes the text we just read. The writer recounts the oil spills by date, beginning with the earliest and ending with the most recent.

Teacher: Let's look for key words that signal when a disastrous oil spill occurred. I will circle the key words and phrases on the display copy, and you circle the same ones on your copy. In the first paragraph, we will circle: "In 1997," "On January 7," "On July 2," and "Lastly, on October 15, 1997." Who can tell us what dates to circle in the second paragraph?

Student: In the second paragraph, we will circle "From 1998 to 1999," "On January 12, 1998," "In 1999," "on June 28," and "on August 3."

Teacher: Good. How many total oil spills are included in the article? Raise your hand when you have an answer and be ready to cite text that supports your claim.

Teacher pauses.

Student: Six oil spills.

Teacher: Good! There are six. How did you find the number so quickly?

Student: The first paragraph includes the text "three oil spills in Asia," and the second paragraph says "three significant oil spills in Nigeria and Australia." I just added them together.

Teacher: Excellent. I love how you read carefully and paid attention to important details. Let's draw a graphic organizer that reflects the text structure. I need to include six places to record information for each of the oil spills in the text. Who has a suggestion for a way to show the information graphically? Take a moment to think about it and sketch out a plan.

Teacher pauses for students to think about and design a graphic organizer.

Teacher: Who has an idea for a graphic organizer to share?

Student: I think that we can keep this graphic organizer pretty simple. I drew six boxes connected by arrows to represent the chronological order of the six oil spills.

Teacher: That sounds like a good plan. I like how you incorporated a way to show the chronology of events. A graphic organizer should follow the text type and help us note the key points. I will draw that here for everybody to see.

Teacher draws six boxes connected by arrows.

Clear Task Assignment

Teacher: I will write the important details for the first one, and then you can do the rest with a partner. You can use a different type of graphic organizer if you choose. The important part is to show the details and the order of events.

Teacher writes the following notes on the graphic organizer.

Teacher: In the first box, I will write when it happened: "January 7, 1997." Then I will write where the spill occurred: "Japan." Next, I will write who or what was responsible: "a Russian tanker." Then I will write how much oil spilled: "5,200 tons of heavy fuel oil." And the result was that "oil leaked on beaches and threatened shellfish beds."

Now it is your turn to complete the important details for each of the oil spills discussed in the article.

Teacher allows time for students to complete the assignment.

Part 2: Writing a Summary Topic Sentence

Teacher: Now that we have completed our graphic organizer and identified the main ideas and supporting details, we are ready to begin drafting a summary of the text. First, let's review the elements of a summary on our Expository Text Summary Mini-Chart.

Teacher points to the mini-chart.

The first thing I notice is that a summary begins with a topic sentence that reflects the overall meaning of the original text. To determine the topic sentence of my summary, I will think about what the entire summary should be about.

To help, I will reread the first part of the original text. It says: "Several of the worst oil spills in marine history have occurred in recent times." That sounds like the thesis statement or topic sentence because the article explains some of the worst oil spills in history. That is what the article is mainly about.

Now I need to use the same key ideas but write the topic sentence in my own words. I think the original sentence states that several significant oil spills have taken place in recent times. I notice that a total of six significant oil spills took place during the late 1990s. I will try to include all that information in my own summary topic sentence.

How about this sentence? "During the late 1990s, there were six significant oil spills in the world."

I think it reflects the overall meaning of the original text. What do you think?

Student: I like it, but I think we can revise it to make it more concise.

Teacher: Great idea! Who has a suggestion to make it more concise?

Student: "During the late 1990s, there were six significant oil spills in the world's oceans."

Teacher: Good job. Now it is much clearer and to the point. We will use this sentence as the opening to the summary.

Part 3: Recording Main Ideas in the Body of the Summary

Instruction

Teacher: Now I am ready to write the body of my summary. I will refer back to my graphic organizer and use information that I listed earlier.

The first thing I will do is think about how to use the notes in each box to create well-constructed sentences.

Let's try it together with the first box and include the date, place, and event to write the first supporting sentence.

We need to say when it happened, so let's start with the date: "On January 7, 1997 . . ."

Next, I want to say what happened: ". . . a Russian tanker dropped 5,200 tons of oil.."

Now I want to say where it happened: ". . . in an ocean near Japan."

So the sentence reads: "On January 7, 1997, a Russian tanker dropped 5,200 tons of oil in an ocean near Japan."

We will go back and revise when we are finished with the first draft.

Let's continue writing. Who has a suggestion for the effect, or what happened as a result of the oil spill?

Student: "This spill contaminated beaches and nearby shellfish beds."

Teacher: I will write that down. I like how you used the word *contaminated*. It is a strong, powerful verb.

Let's do another one together. Who has a suggestion for how to turn the information in the second box into complete sentences that include the important details?

Student: "On July 2, 1997, a tanker dropped 1,500 tons of crude oil in an ocean near Japan. The spill also destroyed fertile fishing grounds."

Teacher: Good job. That was a great way to capture all the information.

Clear Task Assignment

Teacher: Now that we have completed sentences from the first two boxes, it is your turn. Write the remainder of the body of the summary. Convert the notes in the last four boxes of the graphic organizer into well-written sentences. Refer to the Expository Summary Mini-Chart as you write. Remember, you will have time to revise and edit your summary after you complete the draft.

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Expository Text Summary Revision Guide

1. Reread and think about your summary.
2. What do you notice? Use the elements in the table below to guide your thinking and revising.
3. Make one or more of the following revisions to improve your summary: Replace or substitute all or parts of it, add to it, delete (take things out) from it, or reorder (rearrange) it.

| Elements of an Expository Summary | |
|--|---|
| An expository summary is an accurate, concise restatement, written in one's own words, of a text's main ideas and important details. | |
| Clear and concise topic sentence | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explains the topic in the writer's own words• Is not copied word for word from the original text• Suggests the contents of the summary• Reflects the overall meaning of the original text• Is not a traditional introduction |
| All main ideas and important supporting details in body | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is written in complete sentences that make sense• Is written in the writer's own words—not copied word for word from the original text• Has various types of sentences (e.g., simple, compound, complex)• Varies sentence beginnings• Includes transitional words and phrases |
| No trivial or unimportant information | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focuses on the identified main ideas and important supporting details• Contains only significant facts and details about the topic• Does not elaborate details |
| No repeated information | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sticks to the point• Does not include redundant information• Does not reiterate key ideas• Does not include a conclusion |
| Purposeful and precise word choice | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is clear and easy to understand• Includes specific, powerful words• Suggests a category instead of listing all examples or details in the original text |