



PRÉCIS WRITING



GOALS

To enable learners:

1. To apply the skills and strategies of a successful reader.
2. To develop their critical thinking, reading and writing skills.
3. Learn condensing and synthesizing techniques.
4. To develop a basic understanding of précis writing and its nuances.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ♦ Skim (reading the text quickly) to identify the main idea / theme of text.
- ♦ Scan (look at all parts of text carefully) for details.
- ♦ Differentiate between main ideas and supporting details.
- ♦ Sift through the given material to identify the most important details.
- ♦ Provide an appropriate title for the given information / text.
- ♦ Write a précis of the given text in as few words as possible.

INTRODUCTION

A shortening of a text, in one's own words, is known as **précis writing**. The term is derived from the French word *précis* meaning 'precise'. Thus, a précis gives an accurate and concise description of the substance (or the main idea) contained in the text without losing its meaning. In fact, it is an exact reproduction of the logic, organization, and emphasis of the original text.

Précis writing is a very useful exercise as it gives us training in careful reading and develops our capacity to discriminate between the essential and the non-essential. Since it insists on an economy of words, you learn to choose your words carefully and construct your sentences in a concise manner.

Difference between Précis and Summary

Usually the word 'summary' is used loosely to refer to 'précis'. However, there are subtle differences between them.

The first and the most important difference is that a *précis* is a brief statement of a piece of writing such as a

report, article or a chapter from a book; whereas a summary is *a short account of longer pieces of work* such as a thesis or a novel.

Secondly, the précis follows the order and proportion of the material in the original, whereas the writer of the summary is free to change the order and proportion if he wishes to do so.

Another important different between the two is that the précis states only the thought of the original text; whereas, the writer of the summary is free to interpret the material and to comment on it.

What are the Qualities of a good Précis?

Since a good précis displays the writer's writing skills, it must possess the following qualities:

1. Clarity

It is essential that the ideas presented in the précis should be clear and comprehensible. By using simple language and structures, the writer can ensure that there is no ambiguity.

2. Objectivity

The writer must have an objective approach. He should be able to write a précis that is unbiased and purely a summary of the original text.

3. Correctness

The writer must ensure that not just the facts, but also the grammar and sentences are without flaws. Such errors can obscure the meaning of the message.

4. Coherence

A good précis should be coherent i.e. the ideas must be presented in a way that shows the connections clearly.

5. Completeness

The writer should include all the important facts from the text in the précis. No important fact can be omitted to make the summary short.

6. Conciseness

Conciseness is a desirable quality of a good précis. A piece of writing is considered concise if it conveys the message in the fewest possible words. But the writer should not omit essential facts to achieve conciseness.

PRÉCIS WRITING PROCEDURE

Step 1

Read the passage carefully- more than once if so required. The first requirement of the writer is to understand the text well enough to extract its central / main idea.

Step 2

Decide what facts or ideas in the text are essential and what are of secondary or of no importance. It is a good idea to underline the important terms and ideas.

Step 3

Select a suitable title for the proposed précis.

Step 4

Collect all the key points and *prepare a first draft of the précis*, keeping in mind the need to reduce the original text to one-third its length.

The main thoughts expressed in the passage, the ideas it contains, the opinions presented and the conclusion arrived at should be a part of the rough draft.

Step 5

Read the draft. It may so happen that it is too long. Shorten it further, if necessary, by omitting anything which is not necessary to the central idea or by remodeling the sentences. (Normally, you should succeed in producing a good précis by the second draft.)

Step 6

When you have made your second (or final) draft, carefully revise your précis to ensure that you have the bare minimum of words necessary to express the idea of the passage. Check to make sure that the précis has been written in words that are your own and not those of the author.

Points to Remember

- A précis must not exceed one-third of the length of the original passage.
- Identify the central idea and omit unnecessary details.
- Eliminate wordy expressions from the précis.
- Avoid unnecessary repetition.
- Every précis should have a short and appropriate title.
- It should be written in the words of the précis-writer.
- The main ideas of the original text should be presented in the same order in the précis.
- Do not introduce ideas of your own in the précis.
- Do not criticize or change the author's ideas.
- Always use the third person, reported speech and past tense while writing a précis. Only universal truths should be written in the present tense.

**SOLVED EXAMPLE****Q. 1 Write a précis of the passage given below.**

A life of action and danger moderates the dread of death. It not only gives us fortitude to bear pain, but also teaches us at every step the precarious tenure on which we hold our present being. Sedentary and studious men are the most apprehensive on this score. Dr. Johnson was an instance in point. A few years seemed to him soon over, compared with those sweeping contemplations on time and infinity with which he had been used to pose himself. In the still life of a man of letters there was no obvious reason for a change. He might sit in an armchair and pour out cups of tea to all eternity would it had been possible for him to do so. The most

rational cure after all for the inordinate fear of death is to set a just value on life. If we mere wish to continue on the scene to indulge our head-strong humour and tormenting passions, we had better be gone at once; and if we only cherish a fondness for existence according to the good we desire from it, the pang we feel at parting which it will not be very server.

SOLUTION

Step 1:

Identify the main idea: The text discusses people's fear of death. It details why some people fear death and how this fear can be overcome.

Step 2:

Identify the main points / facts:

- a) We do not fear death if we live an active life.
- b) Those people who fear death the most are the ones who spend much time sitting and studying.
- c) This happens because they lead an inactive and peaceful life and do not want any change.
- d) The most sensible way of ridding oneself of the fear of death is by valuing life.
- e) We should be comfortable with the knowledge that life is unpredictable and that our hold upon life is very uncertain.

Step 3:

Provide a suitable title: The Fear of Death.

Step 4:

Write the first draft:

If we lead an active life facing dangers, we will fear death less. People who spend a lot of their time lazing around and leading a peaceful life are the ones who are most afraid of death. This is because they do not want any change. The most sensible way of getting rid of the fear of death is to value life properly. If we do not give unnecessary importance to our life, we will not feel the pang of death.

Step 5:

Edit your work.

Remember that the précis cannot be more than a third of the length of the original text. Since the given passage is approximately 200 words, the précis cannot exceed 65 words. However the first draft consists of 80 words. Therefore it needs to be edited. Example:

'People who spend a lot of their time lazing around and leading a peaceful life are the ones who are most afraid of death. This is because they do not want any change.' can be rewritten more succinctly in the following manner: *'People, who lead a lazy and peaceful life, are the most afraid of death.'*

Step 6:

Write the final draft.

The Fear of Death

If we lead an active life facing dangers, we will fear death less. People, who lead a lazy and peaceful life, fear

change and are most afraid of death. The most sensible way of getting rid of the fear of death is to value life properly. If we do not give unnecessary importance to our life, we will not feel the pang of death.

SAMPLE

1. Sentence Correction is probably the easiest sub-section within the Verbal section of the GMAT for you to improve. Doing well on this section is really a function of knowing your grammar rules very well and then practicing them ad nauseum with high quality practice problems. Spend some time figuring out what the best materials are, study those materials, and then go back and study the materials a few more times to make sure you have the grammar rules down cold. It is important to do this because you will want to get these questions done quickly so you can save time for the more time-consuming Critical Reasoning and Reading Comprehension sections.

There are a few good books out there to learn the fundamentals of sentence correction, but I used the Manhattan GMAT Sentence Correction Guide. I have also looked through the Aristotle Sentence Correction book and can say that is of very high quality as well. The Manhattan GMAT book was really great and was very clear and concise in describing all the grammar rules I needed to learn. My main complaint about it is that it doesn't have very many practice problems. From what I can tell, this book seems to be the standard book that people suggest when talking about this section of the test and I don't disagree. In case you are wondering, you don't actually have to learn that many grammar rules for the GMAT. The number of rules you have to learn pales in comparison to the topics you must know for the math section of the test. However, the questions on the GMAT are very tricky, so you should go through the Manhattan GMAT book 5-6 times and even make flashcards to make sure you have every rule absolutely down cold. If you do, then you should be able to focus on the meaning of each sentence, which is usually what is required for the harder questions on the test. For practice problems, I really just used the Official Guide and the Official Guide Verbal Supplement. Those were really great resources for practice problems.

I would also recommend memorizing idioms for the test. As of the last few months, idioms are less of a focus on the test, but knowing idioms down cold is an easy way to get an extra question or two correct. You also don't really need to spend that much time memorizing them, so why wouldn't you want to do it?

As I mentioned before, there are instances on more difficult problems where you need to assess the meaning of the sentence and what it is trying to convey. Keep this in mind and try not to obsess over very detailed grammar rules. When in doubt, go with the answer choice that seems to have the most logical meaning over the one that appears to follow some minute grammar rule the best. If the meaning of the original sentence is changed in one of the answer choices, it is definitely a wrong answer choice. If you follow this advice, I guarantee that you will do well on the sentence correction section of the GMAT.

(Source: Free Articles from ArticlesFactory.com)

Précis

GMAT Sentence Correction- How to Get Better

The Sentence Correction of the GMAT is very doable. Knowing your grammar rules and practicing them will ensure success. Identify the best study material; study them a few times to ensure you have the rules on your fingertips.

Some reference books that you could use to learn the fundamentals of sentence correction are Manhattan GMAT Sentence Correction Guide and Aristotle Sentence Correction book. You don't actually have to learn

that many grammar rules for the GMAT. However, the questions on the GMAT are very tricky, so you should make sure you have every rule absolutely down cold.

There are instances on more difficult problems where you need to assess the meaning of the sentence and what it is trying to convey. When in doubt, go with the answer choice that seems to have the most logical meaning over the one that appears to follow some minute grammar rule the best. Also, remember that the answer is definitely incorrect if the meaning of the original sentence is changed.

- 2) India's trade deficit with China increased to \$52.69 billion in 2015-16 from \$48.48 billion in the previous financial year, Parliament was informed on Monday.

"During the April-September period of 2016-17, the deficit is at \$25.22 billion," Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

"Increasing trade deficit with China can be attributed primarily to the fact that Chinese exports to India rely strongly on manufactured items to meet the demand of fast expanding sectors like telecom and power," she said.

India is negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade agreement keeping in view "its offensive export interests" as well as sensitivities with respect to all participating countries including China, she said. She added that efforts are being made to increase overall exports by diversifying the trade basket with emphasis on manufactured goods, services, resolution of market access issues and other non-tariff barriers.

(Source: The Hindu)

Précis

India's increasing trade deficit with China

According to Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, India's trade deficit with China has risen by \$4.21 billion, since the last fiscal year, reaching a figure of \$ 52.69 billion. She attributes this to the imports made by the telecom and power sector. To bridge this gap, efforts are being made to enhance the overall exports by diversifying the market emphasizing on various services and manufactured goods.

Exercises

Read the following articles and write a précis for each of the following.

- 1) India's new mining bill has provisions which seek, rightly, to shovel money from mining companies to rural people affected by mining, but the devil could lie in the detail. The proposal has three defects— One, it seeks differential treatment for coal and other minerals—coal miners would share 26% of their profits, while miners of other minerals would give additional royalty payments. Two, it exempts captive miners from this obligation to share mineral wealth. And three, it leaves out the key variable, the price of the ore, manipulating which companies can arbitrarily understate their profits and pay a pittance as royalty, as they indeed have been. The sensible thing is to link royalty to the globally traded price of the mineral in question and assign a share of reasonable royalty to the local community. Unify the sharing parameter as a share of the royalty linked to globally traded prices, for every mineral.

As coal mining is done mostly by state owned giant Coal India, it will have to pay most. Current royalty rates, revised every three years, are pathetically low. Miners routinely understate prices at which they sell minerals to deflate the value of royalties. Some of India's largest miners are actually power, steel and other metals makers that squat on large captive mines. (Archives: newspaper)

- 2) India has witnessed great expansion of educational opportunities since the attainment of independence.

However, the disabled children have not yet benefited in any substantial manner from the growth in educational facilities. Education of handicapped children is not considered important as it is believed that such children ultimately become more dependent and non productive. It is therefore believed that scarce national resources should not be wasted on them.

Further, it has been our misconceived notion that the education of handicapped children requires highly specialized people and as such, it must essentially be very costly. Maybe, precisely for these wrong notions, we have not been able to involve clinical and educational specialization programmes of training and education exclusively meant for handicapped children.

It is encouraging to note that the new National Policy on Education has recommended the placement of such children in regular schools so as to provide them with integrated education along with normal students. The integrated education will take care of the different needs of various categories and types of disabled children. The objective is to place the disabled children in ordinary schools for imparting education with the help of special teachers, aids and other resources. For fulfilling this objective an array of the necessary infrastructure by way of training of teachers, provision of equipment and book etc are some of the basic pre-requisites. Hopefully, the parents and their handicapped children will be greatly relieved when the latter are transferred to regular schools.

- 3) Interviews are the most common method used by employers to find candidates for jobs. Many candidates take the interview process very seriously, while others do not. There are 5 interview mistakes that you must avoid if you are to secure the job that you want.

1. Being late

Apart from a major emergency when everything shuts down, there really is no excuse for being late. Take the time to plan your journey, estimate how long it will take to get to the interview venue and build in time for delays. Plan to arrive 15 minutes before your interview time and allow 30 minutes for delays. It is better to arrive 45 minutes early than 15 minutes late.

2. Not knowing about the organisation

A question to find out what you know about the organisation is almost guaranteed. Despite this many candidates are unable to demonstrate that they have even done basic research. With the power of the internet and more general freedom of information there really is no excuse.

3. Not knowing why you want the job

This is another interview favourite. The interviewer knows that you need to earn money so make sure this is not your response. Is it something about the businesses reputation, the challenges it faces, the segment of the market it serves, style of management or progression prospects. Whatever it is be clear on why you want the job.

4. Not knowing yourself

A question about your strengths and weaknesses will come up in some form or other. Clearly you don't want to come up with a weakness that will blow away your chances of getting the job, but at the same time you need to demonstrate self awareness. Think of 3 strengths and 3 development areas that you will talk about in the interview.

5. Asking about salary

Good interviewers will give you the opportunity to ask them questions. Poorly prepared candidates will not make the most of this opportunity. They will ask (before they have been offered the job) about

salary, benefits and holidays. The well prepared candidate will focus on questions about promotion prospects, training and development, the future direction of the company and what it is like to work in the organisation.

Interviews are challenging for both the interviewer and candidates. By avoiding some of the most common mistakes, you can greatly increase your chances of success.

Source: Free Articles from ArticlesFactory.com

ANSWER KEY

1) Loopholes in New Mining Bill

India's new mining bill that diverts funds from mining companies to rural people affected by mining has numerous loopholes. It seeks differential treatment for coal and other minerals. It exempts captive miners from this obligation to share mineral wealth. It disregards the price of the ore, manipulating which companies can understate their profits. Instead, royalty can be linked to the globally traded price of the mineral and unifying the sharing parameter thus ensuring fairness.

2) Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities

Despite expansion of educational opportunities in India, the disabled children have not yet benefited significantly. Due to the belief that handicapped children are dependent and non productive and their education requires highly specialized teachers, educational programmes for handicapped children have never been implemented. The new National Policy on Education recommends that such children be placed in regular schools where their needs are catered to. However, to fulfill this objective, there are prerequisites such as training of teachers, provision of equipment and book, etc. Hopefully, this recommendation will bring relief to handicapped children.

3) Interview Mistakes that Must be Avoided

Since interviews are still the most common method of selecting candidates for jobs, there are some mistakes that you must avoid making during an interview:

1. **Being late :** There is no excuse for being late, so plan in a manner that you arrive a few minutes earlier.
2. **Not knowing about the organization:** Since it is certain that you will be asked a question regarding what you know about the organization, you must do a basic research before you arrive for the interview.
3. **Not knowing why you want the job:** Your interviewer would want to know why you want the job. Have something to tell them apart from the fact that you need to earn money'.
4. **Not knowing yourself:** You need to demonstrate self awareness. Think of strengths and development areas that you will talk about in the interview.
5. **Asking about salary:** When given a chance to ask questions, enquire about things like training and development, instead of enquiring about salary and perks.