Writing a Summary

A summary condenses information and restates only the main points

Steps for Writing a Summary:

I. Outline:
   A. Find the main idea (thesis) of the essay, article, or whatever is your source of information.
   B. Find the topic sentences for the main ideas that support the thesis.
   C. Include key words and phrases.

II. Begin Writing:
   A. State the source and subject of your summary; e.g., if you are summarizing an essay, your first sentence should identify the author, state the title of the essay, and indicate the thesis of the essay.
   B. Use your own words: use language that you understand to avoid unnatural sounding sentences.
   C. You may arrange the information in a different order that the original.
   D. Write only about the ideas and information found within the source: do not include your own opinions.
   E. Avoid using unnecessary phrases like "the author believes" or "another interesting point is."
   F. Limit the use of quotes; use a direct quotation only if it is absolutely necessary to convey an idea.
   G. Draw inferences; make thoughtful guesses based on the author's information.

Editing a Summary:

I. Re-read your summary to eliminate excess wordiness such as unnecessary details, phrases, or words.
II. Combine sentences whenever possible to show relationships between ideas.
III. Try to express yourself as briefly, clearly, and accurately as possible.

Source: I. Lara, ESL Instructor, Sacramento City College