

Summarizing Sources

Why?

You will be reading, annotating, and summarizing information from several sources in preparing to write a research report (and throughout your academic career). Summarizing the ideas from each of your sources (on notecards or in a typed list of notes) is a good strategy to remember ideas, sort information, and keep track of sources.

How?

Once you have read a source and decided to use its ideas in your own project, put the ideas from the source in your own words. In other words, recap what a writer has said. Sum up the ideas in your own words.

- Make sure your summary captures the main idea of the source content.
- Make sure your summary accurately and completely reflects the content – the ideas, viewpoint, and tone.
- Be certain the summary is **entirely** in your own words. (This will assure that you don't plagiarize.) If you borrow the language of sources as you paraphrase them, you will likely slip into plagiarism when you write your paper.
- When you are confident that you have summarized or paraphrased sources correctly, **NEVER BORROWING THEIR LANGUAGE**, you may then safely transfer those notes directly into your paper, giving the source of the information due credit. In effect, when you summarize and paraphrase (a more extensive summary, recording all key evidence) in your own words, you have begun to write your own paper.

Summary Examples:

"Sanity 101" describes how college admission is growing more and more competitive but counsels parents against worrying too much about overly competitive college admission standards. In reality, only a small percentage of elite schools are highly selective about admissions. The main worry, actually is acquiring the financial aid necessary to attend college.

Source: "Sanity 101." Editorial. *USA Today* 19 Jan. 2009: 10A. Print.

Trade has always been a significant part of Hopi culture since prehistory. An article in *Natural History.org*. notes that the Hopi trade network went from the Great Plains to the Pacific Coast, and from the Great Basin (of Nevada and Utah) to present-day Mexico. Traded items included cotton, ceramics, baskets, jewelry, and even parrots from Mexico (Whiteley). This illustrates that native American trading was vastly more extensive than most people realize.

Source: Peter M. Whiteley, "Ties That Bind: Hopi Trade Encounters." *Natural History.org*. Web. 10 Oct. 2011.