



TAKING NOTES ON NON-FICTION



MLA 8 Citation

When reading a non-fiction piece always make note of the key elements for a proper citation in the event that you will need it later.

The following format is the current order in which you organize these elements when available.

Sample Citation:

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of the Article or Individual Page." *Title of the Website*, Name of the Publisher, Date of Publication in Day Month Year format, URL.

TEMPLATE

1. Author.
2. Title of Piece.
3. Title of Source,
4. Version,
5. Volume Number,
6. Book or Website Publisher,
7. Publication Date or Year,
8. Location of the Source (URL, permalink, or Page Range).

First Time Reading the Article or Essay

- Read the text for its main points
- Identify and define any unfamiliar or difficult language

Second Time Reading the Article or Essay

- Reread carefully and make a descriptive outline
 - Write down the text's central idea/thesis. (Pretend you had to explain it to another person in one sentence)
 - Identify the text's major divisions or chunks. These divisions typically function as background, supporting information, summary of opposing views, etc.
- Try summarizing each division in one or two sentences
- Finally, combine summaries of the parts into a coherent whole

What Makes a Good Summary?

Good summaries must be fair, unbalanced, accurate, and complete. The following questions can be used to help evaluate drafts of a summary.

- Is the summary **economical** and precise?
- Is the summary **neutral** in its representation of the original author's ideas, omitting the writer's own opinions?
- Does the summary reflect the proportionate coverage given various points in the original text?
- Are the original author's ideas expressed in the summary writer's **own words**?
- Does the summary use **attributive tags** (such as "Westin argues") to remind readers whose ideas are being presented?
- Does the summary quote sparingly (usually only key ideas or phrases that cannot be said precisely except in the original author's own words)?
- Will the summary **stand alone** as a unified and coherent piece of writing?
- Is the original **source cited** so that readers can locate it?

Rhetorical Précis

- A rhetorical précis differs from a summary in that it is a less neutral, more analytical condensation of both the content and method of the original text. If you think of a summary as primarily a brief representation of what a text says, then you might think of the rhetorical précis as a brief representation of what a text both says *and* does. Here are the specific directions for what to include in a four-sentence rhetorical précis:
- Sentence 1--- name of author, genre, and title of work, date in parentheses; a rhetorically accurate verb (such as "claims," "argues," "asserts," "suggests"); and a THAT clause containing the major idea or thesis statement in the work.
- Sentence 2--- an explanation of how the author develops and supports the thesis, usually in chronological order.
- Sentence 3--- a statement of the author's apparent purpose.
- Sentence 4--- a description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.