

25-WORD SUMMARIES



Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to provide students with the opportunity to reflect on each reading and to generate short, meaningful summaries. Creating thoughtful summaries requires considerable cognitive organization and reflection, and results in significant meaning making.



Rationale: The processes of reflection, knowledge organization, and the self-generation of meaning have proved to be quite effective in fostering meaningful learning (see Baddeley, 1999, and Haberlandt, 1999). Writing accurate very short summaries (e.g., 25-word summaries) requires you to reflect on the chapter read and abstract from the chapter the essential message or theme that characterize the author's purpose in writing. This abstraction process can generate significant understanding and organization of the material.



Format: Each summary should be a clear, concise, and coherently organized statement of the main ideas in the reading. Specifically, each summary must be *25 words or less* and should focus on the essential ideas of the reading. It is important to remember that the task is to represent the *author's* essential ideas (why was the article/chapter/book written?). Whether or not you agree with the essential ideas is a different issue. Ultimately, in expressing the author's essential ideas, you will demonstrate your own understanding of the material in the reading.

The following guidelines/recommendations for completing 25-word summaries were extracted from interviews with students near the end of previous classes where 25-word summaries were completed.

- Provide time to read, annotate, write, and rewrite.
- Provide time between reading/annotating and writing.
- Develop a strategy for annotating.
- Look for important details while reading.
- Read the entire article before committing to main ideas.
- Every word counts – write and rewrite.
- Writing summaries develops over time.



Grading: Each 25-Word Summary is worth 100 points and will be assessed using the following criteria:

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| 1. Structural Format | 20 pts |
| a. Is the summary 25 words or less? | |
| b. Is the summary a coherent sentence, or sentences? | |
| c. Does the summary avoid a simple listing of concepts, terms, or themes? | |
| 2. Clarity of Thought and Expression | 40 pts |
| a. Are the ideas expressed well, well thought out, and integrated? | |
| c. Does every word in the summary have a meaningful purpose? | |
| d. Are correct grammar and syntax used? | |
| 3. Delineation of Core Message | 40 pts |
| a. Does the summary accurately reflect the reading's essential message(s)? | |
| b. Does the summary accurately integrate more than one essential message? | |





Pragmatics:

1. Be thoughtful Think before you write.
2. Be concise There is much to include in a 25-word summary.
3. Be accurate Reflect on the author's main ideas, themes, and concepts.
4. Be precise The meaning of every word counts.



References:

Baddeley, A. D. (1999). *Essentials of human memory*. East Sussex, UK: Taylor & Francis Group.
Haberlandt, K. (1999). *Human memory: Exploration and application*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.



Honor Code: The Graduate Honor Code will be strictly enforced on this assignment. Any suspected violations of the Honor Code will be promptly reported to the Honor System. Students are allowed to discuss with other students the nature of this assignment, their understanding of their own observations, and the general concepts he or she will be discussing. Student should not, however, share their completed responses, before submission, with other students in the class. Beyond that, the Honor Code general principles of cheating, plagiarism, falsification, and academic sabotage are still applicable (see <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/>).

