

Writing an Objective Summary

An objective summary tells what happened in a text without using any opinions or judgements. This resource includes step-by-step instructions that students can use to fill out a graphic organizer and eventually develop and evaluate their own objective summary of a text.

Additional Resources

To learn more, read our previous blog post [“Supporting Your Children’s and Teens’ Home Learning: Writing an Objective Summary”](#) by Leah Zimmerman, Ph.D.

Writing an Objective Summary

What is an Objective Summary?

A *summary* is a short, concise statement of the most important information in a text. In particular, a summary identifies the topic and most important textual details of a text. When you write a summary, you write the information in your own words.

An *objective summary* is a summary that does not include any opinions or judgments about what is written in the text. Instead, it only includes information that comes from the text. Writing objective summaries can help you understand texts that you read and identify the most important information in the text. Moreover, writing objective summaries can help you improve your writing skills!

To write an objective summary, follow the instructions below. You can summarize a whole text, like a book or news article, or just a portion of a text, like a book chapter. If you need any help, be sure to ask an adult.

Directions

Use steps 1-4 to guide you in filling out this graphic organizer:

Transition	Detail	Number
<p>Topic Sentence:</p>		

1. As you are reading, jot down the most important details from the text in the “Details” column on the graphic organizer. Important details are those that are critical to understanding the text. If someone could understand the text without knowing about a certain detail, then it is **not** important! In addition, remember that **textual details must be written in your own words, and should not contain any opinions or judgments about the text!**

**TIP: Don't fall in love with interesting details! Even if a detail is interesting, strange, or exciting, it is not necessarily important to your objective summary.*

2. Write a topic sentence in the “Topic sentence” box. A topic sentence identifies the topic of the text, or what the whole text is about. It captures all of the textual details you identified in Step 1.
3. Number each sentence in the “Number” column to show the order in which you will write these details in your summary. Remember, the details will not always be written in the order in which they occurred in the passage. Instead, they should be written in a logical order that helps the reader of your summary understand what the text was about.
4. Add an appropriate transition word or phrase to the beginning of each detail in the “Transition” column. Options for transition words and phrases are listed below. An appropriate transition word or phrase accurately shows the relationship between details.

Time/Sequence	Addition	Cause/Effect	Compare/Contrast
First	In addition	As a result	Similarly
Initially	Additionally	Consequently	Likewise
Next	Furthermore	Hence	In the same way
Then	Moreover	Therefore	In contrast
Last	Also	Thus	Conversely
Finally		For this reason	However

5. Combine your topic sentence, transitions, and details to write your summary:

6. Evaluate your summary using the checklist below. If your summary does not meet all of the criteria, revise your summary accordingly.

- Written in my own words
- Includes a topic sentence
- Only includes important textual details
- Only includes information from the text (does not include opinions)
- Includes appropriate transition words and phrases

7. Ask an adult to use the checklist to evaluate your summary. Revise the summary to address any feedback you receive.