

Compiled and prepared
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PRÉCIS WRITING

The word précis is derived from French that means summary and précis writing means the art of summarizing. Précis writing is one of the most useful skills you can acquire both as a student and as a professional. A good précis shows the reading ability and writing skills of a person. Précis writing involves summarizing a document to extract the maximum amount of information, then conveying this information to a reader in minimum words.

Definition: A précis is a clear, compact logical summary of a passage which gives only the essential or important ideas of the original text.

RULES OF MAKING A PRÉCIS

A well written précis should be a serviceable substitute for the original work. The goal of a précis is to preserve the core essence of the work in a manner that is both clear and concise. While writing a précis, the writer should follow the below given rules to make it an effective piece of work.

Read Carefully

First read the passage twice or thrice carefully to summarize it. This will enable you to understand the main theme of the passage.

Underlining

Underline and mark the important ideas and essential points from the original text.

Outline

With the help of underlined ideas, draw the outline of your précis.

Omission

Omit all the unnecessary information or the long phrases which could be replaced by one word. All the adjectives and the adverbs can also be omitted in order to make a good précis.

Don't Omit

While making a précis, the writer should never omit the important points and ideas which are essential to be described.

Size

Keep the fact in your mind that the length of the précis should be the one third of the original passage.

Indirect Speech

A précis should be written in indirect speech. If there is direct speech in the passage, it should be changed into indirect speech.

Tense and Person

It should be written in the third person and past tense. In the case of universal truth the present tense should be used.

Own Words

A précis should be written in your own words and the writer should abstain from borrowing words from the original passage.

Précis of a Dialogue

The précis of a dialogue or conversation should always be expressed in form of narrative.

Objective Approach

A précis writer should adopt an objective approach. He should not add his personal ideas to a précis. Put all the important points and ideas in a logical order.

One Paragraph

There could be two or more paragraphs in the original text. While making the précis, try to write all the ideas in one paragraph.

Rough Draft

After omitting all the unnecessary ideas, the writer should prepare a rough draft to finalize it.

Final Draft

Having read the rough draft and pointed out some mistakes which may be found in the rough draft, the writer can prepare the final draft.

Sample 2

Home is for the young, who knows "nothing of the world and who would be forlorn and sad, if thrown out from it. It is providential, shelter of the weak and inexperienced, who have to learn as yet to cope with the temptations which lies outside of it. It is the place of training of those who are not only ignorant, but have no yet learnt how to learn, and who have to be taught by careful individual trail, how to set about profiting by the lessons of teacher. And it is the school of elementary studies—not of advances, for such studies alone can make master minds. Moreover, it is the shrine of our best affections, the bosom of our fondest recollections, at spell upon our after life, a stay for world weary mind and soul; wherever we are, till the end comes. Such are attributes or offices of home, and like to these, in one or other sense or measure, are the attributes and offices of a college in a university.

Précis/One Third Summary

Home shelters the young who are weak and inexperienced and unable to face the temptations in life. It is a centre of their elementary education and a nursery of sweet affections and pleasant memories. Its magic lasts forever. A weary mind turns to it for rest. Such is the function of a home and in some measure of the university.

Sample 3

Teaching is the noblest of professions. A teacher has a sacred duty to perform. It is he on whom rests the responsibility of moulding the character of young children. Apart from developing their intellect, he can inculcate in them qualities of good citizenship, remaining neat and clean, talking decently and sitting properly. These virtues are not easy to be imbibed. Only he who himself leads a life of simplicity, purity and rigid discipline can successfully cultivate these habits in his pupils.

Besides a teacher always remain young. He may grow old in age, but not in spite. Perpetual contact with budding youths keeps him happy and cheerful. There are moments when domestic worries weigh heavily on his mind, but the delightful company of innocent children makes him overcome his transient moods of despair.

Précis/One Third Summary

Teaching is the noblest profession. A teacher himself leading a simple, pure and disciplined life can mould the character of the young children and make them neat and good mannered citizens. Besides he remains every young forgetting his own domestic worries in the constant company of the young.

Sample

English education and English language have done immense goods to India, in spite of their evident drawbacks. The notions of democracy and self-government are the born of English education. Those who fought and died for mother India's freedom were nursed in the cradle of English thought and culture. The West has made contribution to the East. The history of Europe has fired the hearts of our leaders. Our struggle for freedom has been inspired by the struggles for freedom in England, America and France. If our leaders were ignorant of English and if they had not studied this language, how could they have been inspired by these heroic struggles for freedom in other lands? English, therefore, did us great good in the past and if properly studied will do immense good in future.

English is spoken throughout the world. For international contact our commerce and trade, for the development of our practical ideas, for the scientific studies, English-is indispensable "English is very rich in literature," our own literature has been made richer by this foreign language. It will really be a fatal day if we altogether forget Shakespeare, Milton, Keats and Shaw.

Precis/ One Third Summary

In spite of its various defect English education did great good to India . The ideas of democracy and self-government were its gifts. Nursed on English education the Indian leaders were inspired by the Western thought, culture and freedom struggles. They fought for and won their motherland's freedom. Being spoken thought-out the world English is necessary for international contact, trade, commerce and science. English is rich in literature; its master mind cannot be neglected.

Sample 5

When we survey our lives and efforts we soon observe that almost the whole of our actions and desires are bound up with the existence of other human beings. We notice that whole nature resembles that of the social animals. We eat food that others have produced, wear clothes that others have made, live in houses that others have built. The greater part of our knowledge and beliefs has been passed on to us by other people though the medium of a language which others have created. Without language and mental capacities, we would have been poor indeed comparable to higher animals.

We have, therefore, to admit that we owe our principal knowledge over the least to the fact of living in human society. The individual if left alone from birth would remain primitive and beast like in his thoughts and feelings to a degree that we can hardly imagine. The individual is what he is and has the significance that he has, not much in virtue of the individuality, but rather as a member of a great human community, which directs his material and spiritual existence from the cradle to grave.

Précis/ One Third Summary

Being social animals, human beings have their actions and desires bound up with society. In matter of food, clothes, knowledge and belief they are interdependent. They use language created by others. Without language their mental power would not grow. They are superior to beast, because they live in human society. An individual life left alone from birth would grow utterly beast like. So human society and not individuality guides man's material and spiritual existence.