

Summarizing and Paraphrasing: A Self Check

From John C. Bean, Virginia A. Chappell, and Alice M. Gillam. *Reading Rhetorically: Brief Edition*. Pearson, 2007.

TABLE 6.2 • DO'S AND DON'TS WITH SUMMARY, PARAPHRASE, AND QUOTATIONS

When You Summarize	Do	Don't
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make your summary as concise as possible• Represent your source's meaning accurately and fairly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distract readers by including points not directly relevant to your purpose
When You Paraphrase	Do	Don't
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paraphrase only what you need to develop your points• Be sure you understand the language you are paraphrasing• Recast sentences to create a genuine paraphrase	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Merely change a few words• Distort the original's meaning or intention
When You Quote	Do	Don't
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep the actual quotation as short as possible• Fit the quotation naturally into your own sentence structure• Verify the absolute accuracy of the quotation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use quotes as a shortcut around difficult ideas• Distract readers with long quotes

With All Three Techniques

- Link your text to your sources with clear attributive tags and appropriate citations.
- Represent the source fairly and accurately.

BOX 3.2 CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING SUMMARIES

Good summaries must be fair, balanced, accurate, and complete. This checklist of questions will help you 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 "Weston 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?

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE PARAPHRASE

- ... Avoid mirroring the sentence structure or organization of the original.
- ... Simplify complex ideas by pulling them apart and explaining each smaller component of the larger idea.
- ... Use synonyms for key words in the original and replace unfamiliar or technical vocabulary with more familiar terms.

As a check, try paraphrasing the passage twice, the second time paraphrasing your own paraphrase; then compare your second paraphrase with the original to make sure that you have sufficiently recast it into your own language.