

## Summarizing and Attributing Information

This sheet describes a technique for writing an objective summary of a magazine article or an essay. It also includes techniques for giving your opinion about what you write.

A summary sentence should include four elements:

- Name of the article
- Author's name
- Thesis statement of the article
- Author's purpose

Read the article completely and articulate the author's thesis in a declarative sentence (your own words).

Example: Television reduces interaction among family members.

Determine the author's name and the name of the article.

Name: Marie Winn  
Article: "Television: The Plug-in Drug"

Select a verb that accurately attributes the thought to the author. This verb indirectly indicates the author's purpose. Possible verbs of attribution: suggests, contends, observes, asserts, argues, indicates, implies, writes, states, complains.

Place the word **that** in front of the author's thesis.

Example: that television reduces interaction among family members

Combine the previous steps in the following format:

In (her, his) article (name of article), (name of author) (verb of attribution) that (author's thesis).

Example: In her essay, "Television: The Plug-in Drug," Marie Winn argues that television reduces interaction among family members.

## Giving Your Opinion About What Someone Else Writes

You can give your opinion about what someone writes by using an adverb in front of the verb of attribution.

- Adverbs that express agreement: correctly, rightly, accurately, persuasively, compellingly
- Adverbs that express disagreement: wrongly, incorrectly, mistakenly, falsely

Of course, you can write what the author claims, and then, by your choice of words (your diction) you can express your agreement or disagreement. The method described above gives you a method of capturing the author's idea and expression your opinion about it **in one sentence**.

Example:

**Agreement:** In her essay, "Television: The Plug-in Drug," Marie Winn persuasively argues that television reduces interaction among family members.

**Disagreement:** In her essay, "Television: The Plug-in Drug," Marie Winn wrongly suggests that television reduces interaction among family members.

Note that I changed the verb of attribution in the disagreement. Sometimes you have to play with words to "hear" how they sound best.

**Subtext:** The subtext of an article is the implied general meaning. For example, a personal narrative usually does not have a thesis statement. However, a personal narrative may imply that "you should not quit an activity just because it is difficult." This implication is the subtext of the article, the general "meaning" of the article. The subtext can also be seen as the underlying social, cultural, or political message that the writer conveys in his or her essay. The subtext (message) goes beyond the personal. It addresses general social issues.

## **Examples**

**Name of Article:** “Stop Me if You’ve Heard This One”

Author: Anne Banks

Subtext: Stories about people coping with the current economic meltdown will lift the mood of the country.

Summary Sentence: In her essay, “Stop Me if You’ve Heard This One,” Anne Banks writes that telling stories about people coping with the current economic meltdown will lift the mood of the country.

Thesis with your (student writer’s) opinion: Banks argues correctly that stories about people coping with the current economic meltdown will lift the mood of the country.

**Name of Article:** “Out of the Closet at Gunpoint.”

Author: Shariq Mahbub

Subtext: People tend to hide their homosexuality from family and society because they are afraid to be judged and criticized.

Summary Sentence: In his essay, “Out of the Closet at Gunpoint” Shariq Mahbub writes that he was forced to acknowledge his gay identity to his parents because he was threatened.

Thesis with your (student writer’s) opinion: Mahbub implies incorrectly that people tend to hide their homosexuality from family and society because they are afraid to be judged and criticized.