

How to write a summary of a science article

Your summary should have 3 parts; an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

Introduction:

- Give background information about the field of research addressed in this paper.
 - What is the process being studied? Examples include bacterial pathogenesis, regulation of stem cell development, diabetes research, cancer therapies, etc.
 - What is the experimental organism or type of cells being used? Examples include mice, rats, virus, plants, cultured cells.
 - What is the goal of the research? What fundamental question are they trying to answer? What is their hypothesis?
 - What is the most important outcome of their experiments? What did they find out?

Body:

- The body of your summary will address each and every figure (unless I state otherwise). For each figure you should provide the following:
 - State why they are performing the experiment. Every experiment is intended to answer some question.
 - Briefly describe the experiment. You need not describe all aspects of the experiment in detail, rather you should give a general description (rats were infected with 500 cfu of RB50 bacteria ..., cells were infected with virus then..., protein was extracted from cells and visualized by Western blot...)
 - State the most important result of the experiment. How does one determine the important result? Often the author will state something like “these results demonstrate that...”, or “these results clearly show that...”. Do not copy down exactly what the author says (that’s plagiarism), rather paraphrase, in your own words, what the author has stated.

Conclusion:

- Restate the goal of the research.
- State the most important results of the experiments.
- State the importance of the research as it relates to our knowledge of biology and to the well being of mankind.

Summary Format and Length

- The length of the summary will vary with the length of the article. Typically 2-4 pages will do the job.
- The summary must be typed, #12 font, double-spaced, 1 inch margins.

Hint: The work sheets you complete in discussion section should prove very useful while writing the summary.