

A critical summary is a clear and precise review of an article wherein you provide a concise summary followed by a critical comment. In a critical summary, you must **ANALYZE** and **EVALUATE**. You need to:

- understand the main points in an article
- analyze the findings or argument in the article
- decide how you want to critically evaluate the article and provide that

Steps to Critically Summarize an Article

1. Plan Enough Time

Plan to spend at least half of your overall assignment time to reading and understanding the article. Before you can write about it, you have to understand it, and this can take more time than you anticipate. As yourself if the article make sense to you and if you could explain it to someone in plain terms. When you can do this, you are ready to write about it.

2. Scan the Article

Read the headings/subheadings and look at how the paper is organized. Questions to ask yourself:

- Do the headings/subheadings work with the content of the article?
- Why is the article organized this way?
- Do the headings and subheadings work with the title of the paper?

If there are photographs, charts, graphs, or diagrams in the paper:

- Are there captions, and do they relate to the illustration and the article as a whole?

3. Read the **“Introduction”** and **“Abstract”** and the **“Discussion”** or **“Conclusion”** sections

Read the first paragraph (the section headed “Introduction” or “Abstract”)

- What did the author say is the reason for the article? What do they want to show?

Read the “Discussion” or “Conclusion” sections and identify how the author interpreted their research.

- How did the author summarize their thesis? What was presented in the body of the paper, and did that prove or disprove their thesis?

4. Read Carefully and Make Annotations

Once you’ve read the Introduction and Discussion or Conclusion sections:

- Go back to the article and read each section in more detail. You should read each section more than once.
- Make note of the main points and key phrases.
- Summarize each of the main points on a separate sheet of paper. Always highlight/underline definitions, key words, and technical terms. Keep track of page numbers for direct quotes.
* In your assignment, use few direct quotes and ensure you copy them exactly. Remember quotes are used to support your argument, not as the argument itself.
- Keep in mind you will not fully understand the article the first time you read it. You will have to read it multiple times.

5. Analyze and Evaluate What You Read

Reading analytically means you identify the purpose, the main points, the methodology, and findings or conclusions in the article. In addition, a critical summary also involves analyzing

- unstated assumptions
- areas in the argument that are not consistent
- other purposes of the article that are not stated clearly.

Evaluating means, you are making judgements about the value (both positive and negative) of the article. Here is a list of criteria you can use; however, not all of them will be relevant for every kind of article:

- the year the material was published
 - whose the audience, or intended audience, and does that change the reading of the material
 - the originality of the topic in the article
 - the logic of the author's argument
 - the believability of the evidence
 - the validity and appropriateness of the theoretical framework used
 - the appropriateness of the methodology used, and the strengths and weaknesses associated with that approach
 - are the findings presented clearly and fully
 - could the data have been interpreted in another way
 - does the author include everything in the data, or are key things omitted
 - was the conclusions sound and thorough
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How to Structure a Critical Summary

A critical summary has a similar structure to an essay. You must include an introduction, a body and a conclusion, but what you include in each section is different. Before you begin writing the summary, make sure that you understand the assignment and any specifications that your instructor asked for; such as the number of words, pages, font, etc. Consult with your instructor first if you are unclear about any aspect of the assignment.

Introduction (1 paragraph)

- Provide context for the article, this is the background information
- Give the title of the article, the author, source, and, in the case of a magazine or academic journal, the date of publication
- If purposeful to the critical analysis, identify the author's profession and importance
- Describe the purpose or main argument of the material in one sentence
- State your overall impression of the article, this is your **thesis statement** for this assignment

Body (1-2 paragraphs)

- Provide your analytical summaries of the findings/arguments/conclusions of the article
- Discuss the strengths and applicability of the material presented
- Discuss the weaknesses, limitations, and problems with the material
- Make sure to reference the author and the material

Conclusion (1 paragraph)

- Summarize what your BODY paragraphs said
- Make a final judgement on the overall value of the article
- Comment on future implications or views of the topic and why that is important