

THE ART OF CONDENSATION

Summarizing, condensation, or précis writing is an art. It aims at squeezing the meaning of a text into the fewest words .

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

Condensation means process of making a book shorter by taking out anything that is not necessary. The process of condensation in creative writing is synonymous to précis writing.

Meaning of Précis

- Précis is a French word that means to cut short.
- In English , it is connected with the word precise that means something accurately expressed.

A précis must be a concise, complete or lucid piece of writing

- Précis means an abstract; and abstract means the essence.
- A précis must contain the essence of the passage that has been squeezed

Steps to prepare a good précis

- Go through the passage to grasp the general idea.
- Prepare a skeleton of basic structure by noting down the main points and key words.
- Exclude all the illustrations, elaborations, figurative comparison.
- Prepare the first draft by joining the underlined words.

Following points must be checked in the first draft.

- Use of Past Tense
- Use of third person pronoun.
- Use of indirect speech.
- Précis must be one third of the original.
- Main idea of the passage must be reflected through précis.

Title for Précis Writing

- Title can be traced from the main idea of the passage.
- Title must be short and relevant.
- It must begin with a capital letter.
- In case of story the main character or his experience can be the titles.

Example

- Some books are not so important. We can just taste them by reading in some parts, instead of wasting our time on a through reading. Some other books lacking in depth and seriousness, can be completed in a hurried manner. In such cases, as a light novel, superficial reading would serve the purpose. It is like a swallowing a book, without showing much curiosity. There are only a few books which deserve to be studied very carefully. These books should be studied with so much concentration as we eat food to chew and to digest. Just as food taken in this manner gives nourishment to the body, the books studied in this manner strengthen our mind. If the subject matter of some books is not very important to us, we can read them by deputy; that is read their summaries prepared by others. This will save our time and labor. But this is possible only in the case of lesser sort of books. After all a summary is as dry and tasteless as distilled water. It loses the charm.

Solution

- All books are not equally important. Some books can be read in parts, some in a hurried manner. Only a few books need to be thoroughly studied and preserved in mind. Summaries save time but lack the sweetness of the original books.