**Steps for Writing a Summary**

1. **Read the article carefully -- twice!** Summarizing a text is mostly a *reading* exercise. Writing an accurate summary after reading an article quickly or just one time is impossible. Most problems in summary writing have more to do with understanding the text than writing the summary.

2. **Begin your summary by mentioning the author and title.** The publication date, if significant, may also be mentioned. Also, be sure to **end the summary with the page citation**.

Margaret Talbot’s 1994, essay, “The Gender Trap,” examines the value of women’s colleges today (Talbot 74).

3. **At least once more in a long summary, remind the reader that you are summarizing by mentioning the author again** (by author’s last name or full name—never by first name only).

Talbot finds strong support for women’s colleges from many of their graduates.

4. **Avoid unnecessary details**. Summaries give general information only. If readers need details, they need to read the original piece.

5. **Don’t give your own opinion**. The form and expression of a summary makes it clear to the reader that you are accurately presenting the ideas of another author. If you add your own opinion, agree, or disagree in an otherwise well-formed summary, your opinion will appear to be that of the author’s.

6. **Keep it short**. There’s no strict rule about how long a summary can be, but since part of its purpose is to save time, a summary needs to be short. However, be careful to include all *necessary* information.

7. **Use the margins.** Write the main point of each paragraph in the right margin. Use the left margin to write any questions, thoughts, or response to that paragraph.

8. **Analyze the text.** Write on the source—either on the top of the first page or in the back.

* Purpose—Why was this source created?
* Audience—For whom was this source intended?
* Text—What does this source say?
* Context—What else do I (or my readers) need to know for this source to make sense?
* Subtext—Is anything implied, inferred, or deliberately not stated by the author?
* Appeal: Logos, Pathos, Ethos, or blend?
* What research question did this source answer?
* What is my response?

Adapted from http://faculty.smu.edu/jdbradle/sumparMLA.asp