TAKE GOOD NOTES

Tips on Writing Summary Notes

Write a short summary of each source as soon as you finish reading it to capture the gist of the author's argument or study.

WHY?

These summaries may be the most valuable notes you make.

- To pull together the general conclusions and approaches of the experts, which you will refer to in your paper.
- As your research becomes more focused, you can review the summaries to see which works you should return to and study more carefully.
- If you later need more specific information from one of your sources, your summaries can help you locate that source quickly.
- Summary writing is an active, not passive, process. You must digest a reading and get it into your head in a coherent way to summarize it. This helps you master the material for your paper.
- Reviewing the summaries will help you see the different points of view on a topic.

HOW?

1) Put the source away, and then ask yourself these questions and answer them in your summary:

   - What problem was the author trying to understand/resolve?
   - What was his/her hypothesis?
   - What were the results?
   - What was the author’s method or approach in developing his/her argument or testing his/her thesis?
   - What perspective in the field is the author coming from?
   - What here could be useful for my research project?

2) Use mainly your own words, perhaps with some short quoted excerpts. Check for accuracy.

3) Be sure to include information on the source. You might write the summaries on the backs of your working bibliography cards.