**PRECIS WRITING AND COMPREHENSION**

**PRÉCIS WRITING**

The word précis is derived from French that means summary and précis writing means the art of summarizing. Précis writing is one of the most useful skills you can acquire for your work both as a student and as a professional. Précis writing involves summarizing a document to extract the maximum amount of information, then conveying this information to a reader in minimum words.

**Definition:**A précis is a clear, compact logical summary of a passage. It preserves only the essential or important ideas of the original.

ACCORDING TO OXFORD DICTIONARY)

 “It is a short version of a speech or a piece of writing that gives the main points of ideas.”

ACCORDING TO CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY

 “Prices is a short form of the text which briefly gives only the important parts.”

**QUALITIES OF A GOOD PRÉCIS**

A good précis shows the writing skills of a person. It must have the following qualities.

**1. Clarity**

Clarity means getting your message across so that the receiver can understand what the writer is trying to convey. It is the basic and essential need of a précis. The ideas should be clear and understandable. There should not be any ambiguity in your writing. The writer can achieve clarity by using simple language and simple structure. If your précis is not understandable to the reader it will lose its importance and meanings for the reader.

**2. Correctness**

Mistakes in your writings always irritate the reader. Of course mistakes are never intentional; even so there is no excuse for them. At the time of writing or composing a précis the writer must ensure that the facts and figures are correct. Structure of sentences and spellings of words must be correct because a single mistake in structure and spelling may spoil the message. We may consider the mistakes under the following headings:

* Misspelled words
* Mistakes in figures and dates
* Mistakes in punctuation
* Mistakes of grammar and structure

**3. Objectivity**

Objectivity means the ability to present or view facts uncolored by feelings, opinions and personal bias. While making a précis, the writer should adopt an objective approach. He should not give and add his personal opinion and ideas in a précis. A précis should be purely a summary of the original text without any addition.

**4. Coherence**

Coherence means the logical and clear interconnection of ideas in a written piece of work. A good précis should be coherent. The ideas which are presented in a précis must have a logical connection and they all should be interrelated. In short we may say that the ideas should be well knitted so that the writer may not be confused and lose his interest.

**5. Completeness**

Another striking feature of a good précis is completeness. A précis should be complete in all respects. Completeness means that the writer should include all the important facts in a précis. To make it short he should not omit the important ideas. This mistake on the part of the writer will spoil the importance and meaning of the précis.

**6. Conciseness**

Conciseness is a desirable quality of a good précis. Conciseness means to say all that needs to be said and no more. The writer should write what is necessary and avoid writing unnecessary details. A concise piece of work conveys the message in the fewest possible words. But one point must be kept in mind that the writer should not omit some basic and essential facts to achieve conciseness. To achieve conciseness, notice the following suggestions:

* Omitting unnecessary details
* Eliminate wordy expressions
* Include only relevant material
* Avoid unnecessary repetition

**RULES OF MAKING A PRÉCIS**

A well written précis should be a serviceable substitute for the original work. The goal of a précis is to preserve the core essence of the work in a manner that is both clear and concise. While writing a précis, the writer should follow the below given rules to make it an effective piece of work.

**Read Carefully**

First read the passage twice or thrice carefully to summarize it. This will enable you to understand the main theme of the passage.

**Underlining**

Underline and mark the important ideas and essential points from the original text.

**Outline**

With the help of underlined ideas, draw the outline of your précis.

**Omission**

Omit all the unnecessary information or the long phrases which could be replaced by one word. All the adjectives and the adverbs can also be omitted in order to make a good précis.

**Don’t Omit**

While making a précis, the writer should never omit the important points and ideas which are essential to be described.

**Size**

Keep the fact in your mind that the length of the précis should be the one third of the original passage.

**Indirect Speech**

A précis should be written in indirect speech. If there is direct speech in the passage, it should be changed into indirect speech.

**Tense and Person**

It should be written in the third person and past tense. In the case of universal truth the present tense should be used.

**Own Words**

A précis should be written in your own words and the writer should abstain from borrowing words from the original passage.

**Précis of a Dialogue**

The précis of a dialogue or conversation should always be expressed in form of narrative.

**Objective Approach**

A précis writer should adopt an objective approach. He should not add his personal ideas to a précis. Put all the important points and ideas in a logical order.

**One Paragraph**

There could be two or more paragraphs in the original text. While making the précis, try to write all the ideas in one paragraph.

**Rough Draft**

After omitting all the unnecessary ideas, the writer should prepare a rough draft to finalize it.

**Final Draft**

Having read the rough draft and pointed out some mistakes which may be found in the rough draft, the writer can prepare the final draft.

***SOLVED EXCERCISE***

**Passage**

**Read the following passage and answer the question given at the end:**

A life of action and danger moderates the dread of death. It not only gives us fortitude to bear pain, but teaches us at every step the precarious tenure on which we hold our present being. Sedentary and studious men are the most apprehensive on this score. Dr. Johnson was an instance in point. A few years seemed to him soon over, compared with those sweeping contemplations on time and infinity with which he had been used to pose himself. In the still life of a man of letters there was no obvious reason for a change. He might sit in an arm chair and pour out cups of tea to all eternity would it had been possible for him to do so. The most rational cure after all for the inordinate fear of death is to set a just value on life. If we mere wish to continue on the scene to indulge our head-strong humour and tormenting passions, we had better be gone at once,; and if we only cherish a fondness for existence according to the good we desire from it, the pang we feel at parting which it will not be very server.

**Questions:**

1. Suggest a suitable title for the passage.
2. What type of people are afraid of death and why?
3. How can we get rid of the fear of death?
4. What idea do you form about Dr. Johnson from this passage?
5. Explain the meanings of the words written in bold types.
6. Make a précis of the passage.

**SOLUTION**

**i)**  Suitable Title: The fear if death.

**ii)** People who spend much time sitting and studying are the most afraid of death. Because they lead a peaceful life and want no change.

**iii)** The most sensible way of getting rid of the fear if death is to value life properly. We should know that our hold upon life is very risky and that we may die any moment.

**iv)** From this passage we learn that Dr. Johnson was afraid of death. He led a peaceful life and wanted no change. He was fond of tea.

**v)** Explanation of the meanings of words;

**Precarious Tenure** — Uncertain period, life

**Inordinate fear**— Unreasonable fear, fear of death.

**vi)** Summary or précis.

If we lead an active life facing dangers, we will less fear death. People, who lead a lazy and peaceful life, are the most afraid of death. The most sensible way of getting rid of the fear of death is to value life properly. If we do not give unnecessary importance to our life, we will not feel the pang of death.

**COMPREHENSION**

A comprehension test is based on a short passage or article. A student who has to answer the comprehension questions has to understand and grasp the meaning of the passage or article. The understanding power and level of the student is evaluated in a comprehension test. Hence it is important for students to read the comprehension carefully first and then only answer the questions. The passage or article has to be understood perfectly well before questions are answered.

**• Instructions To Be Read With Extra Care**

While reading instructions, always take extra care. At times, the questions are tricky leading the student to misunderstand or miss out important points. Consider the context of the answer first. All questions which you know should be answered first. You can eliminate questions you are not too sure about.

**• First Read The Questions**

Make it a habit to go through the questions first. This will help you to look for relevant answers while reading the passage. Process of fetching answers can be hastened by doing this. If the passage is read first and then the questions, the chances of losing time are more as you will be reading everything again.

**• Check Marks Allotted To Each Question**

There is no point in dedicating too much time on a question that is worth very few marks. Make sure that questions with more marks are answered first and then quickly finish off the ones with the least marks.

**• Allocate Appropriate Time**

You will have to note down the time required for answering every question and accordingly stick to that time, so that all the questions can be attempted in due time.

**• Highlighting Keywords**

Once you have read the questions and have started reading the passage, make sure you highlight any headings, phrases, keywords etc that can help in answering the questions. This method will help you save a lot of time, searching through the passage again.

**• Avoid Copying Text Directly**

While writing down the answers you should not copy chunks of text directly.

**• Review What You Have Written**

To check for avoidable mistakes you must review the paper again at least twice once you are done with answering the questions. If sentences have to be reframed or corrected, then this can be done. In case of answering multiple choice questions, and in case of doubt, importance to reviewing must be given.

**• Use Quotation Marks Wherever Necessary**

Quotation marks will have to be used if at all you will be making use of quotations from the passage. This also carries marks, so make sure you don’t forget them quotation marks.

**• Avoid Using Any Knowledge From Outside The Passage**

Make sure the comprehension is read at least twice. While answering the questions, the answers have to be from what is given in the passage itself as out outside knowledge is not entertained in a comprehension. Avoid any answer that is not supported by relevant information from the passage or article or they will be rendered as incorrect.

If these few important points and techniques are kept in mind then you will surely be able to attempt the examination and comprehension well and in the process score good marks.