

## 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. 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.

### 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.

### 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 EXERCISE

##### 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:

Suggest a suitable title for the passage.

What type of people are afraid of death and why?

How can we get rid of the fear of death?

What idea do you form about Dr. Johnson from this passage?

Explain the meanings of the words written in bold types.

Make a précis of the passage.

SOLUTION

i) Suitable Title: The fear of 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 of 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.