

What is a Précis?

A précis is an analytical summary of a piece of writing. It communicates what the piece of writing says by identifying the parts of an argument. It should answer at least these four questions.

1. What is it about? For example, what question does the author seek to answer or what problem does the author mean to address? This should be pretty close to the author's own words.
2. What is the central point? Where is the chief attempt to answer the question? It is distinguished from the material that establishes the problem, answers objections, or engages in digressions into related topics.
3. What is its greatest strength? What is most interesting or valuable about it?
4. What is its greatest weakness? Imagine how someone might seek to dispute the argument.