Précis Writing

**A Précis is a short summary.** It is not a paraphrase, which merely says in different and simpler words exactly what the passage being paraphrased has to say. A paraphrase may be a long as the passage itself. A précis rarely is more than one-third the length of the original selection and may be only one-fourth as long.

**A Précis gives only the "heart" of a passage.** It omits repetition and such details as examples, illustrations, and adjectives unless they are of unusual importance.

**A Précis is written entirely in the words of the person writing it, not in the words of the original selection.** Avoid the temptation to lift long phrases and whole sentences from the original.

**A Précis is written from the point of view of the author whose work is being summarized.** Do not begin with such expressions as "This author says" or "The paragraph means." Begin as though you were summarizing your own writing.

In writing a Précis proceed as follows:

* Read carefully, sentence by sentence, the passage to be summarized. Try to grasp the writer's main point. Spotting the topic sentence will help. Look up in the dictionary any words whose meaning is not absolutely clear. As you read, take brief notes to be used in your writing.
* When you have finally decided what the author's main point is, write it out in your own words. Do not use the wording of the original except for certain key words which you may find indispensable. If you cannot translate the idea into language of your own, you do not understand them very well. Be especially careful not to rely too much on the topic sentence. Do not add any opinions or ideas of your own.
* Revise your writing until you are sure that you have given an accurate summary.
* Usually you will find your Précis is too long, if it is more than one-third the length of the original. Continue your revision until you have reduced the Précis to the proper length. In this careful revision lies the principal value of the Précis as a composition exercise.

APPROACH TO PRÉCIS WRITING

1. A Précis should reduce the length of the original passage by at least two - thirds.
2. Every important idea must be retained, preferably in the order in which it appears in the original.
3. Unimportant points, including details, illustrations and anecdotes, should be discarded.
4. A first draft of the Précis should be written, then checked to see that it contains the main ideas of the passage.
5. Although you should be as brief as possible. Guard against being so condensed that you obscure the point of passage.
6. Try to capture the tone or feeling of the original, particularly if it is deliberately humorous, ironic or biased.
7. Check the draft for expression errors, repetition or vague phrasing; then write a smoother final version.

**Sample Precis Writing:**

*Text:*

Trees give shade for the benefit of others, and while they themselves stand in the sun and endure the scorching heat, they produce the fruit of which others profit. The character of good men is like that of trees. What is the use of this perishable body if no use is made of it for the benefit of mankind? Sandalwood, the more it is rubbed, the more scent does it yield. Sugarcane, the more it is peeled and cut up into pieces, the more juice does it produce. The men who are noble at heart do not lose their qualities even in losing their lives. What matters whether men praise them or not? What difference does it make whether they die at this moment or whether lives are prolonged? Happen what may, those who tread in the right path will not set foot in any other. Life itself is unprofitable to a man who does not live for others. To live for the mere sake of living one’s life is to live the life of dog and crows. Those who lay down their lives for the sake of others will assuredly dwell for ever in a world of bliss.  
  
**Title- Good men live for others.**  
  
*Outline:*

The character of good men is like that of trees \_\_\_\_\_ What is the use of this perishable body if no use is made of it for the benefit of mankind\_\_\_\_\_ The men who are noble at heart do not lose their qualities even in losing their lives \_\_\_\_\_ Those who tread in the right path will not set foot in any other \_\_\_\_\_ To live for the mere sake of living one’s life is to live the life of dogs or crows \_\_\_\_\_ Those who lay down their lives for the sake of others will assuredly dwell for ever in a world of bliss.   
  
*Precis:*  
**Good men live for others**  
  
The character of good men is like that of trees. They live for others and do not lose their qualities even in losing their lives. They always follow the right path. Praise is immaterial to them.To live for one’s own sake is to lead the life of beasts. Only those who lay down their lives for others will live forever in a world of bliss.