

Mastering English Made Easy

Précis writing: What is required to be done

1. The intention or the main point, and the ideas expressed in the passage are to be understood and reproduced. No main idea should be left out.
2. The ideas should appear in the same order as in the original.
3. New ideas must not be introduced.
4. Choice of vocabulary and the language used must be consistent with the original.
5. Use of exact words from the original is to be avoided.
6. The passage should be compressed to approximately 1/3 of the original.

Précis writing: How to do it

1. Underline the ideas that seem important as you read the passage.
2. Reread and amend the underlining if required.
3. Write the passage, linking the ideas together.
4. Count the words of the main passage and the précis to know the shortfall or excess.
5. Read the main passage again to check if any ideas have been left out.
6. Rewrite, making changes where necessary.

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Two of the passages from the page are reproduced below along with my précis of the same to give you an idea of alternate writing styles.

Underlining the main ideas in the first passage:

The use of leaded gasoline in vehicles designed for unleaded gasoline can increase tailpipe emissions 200 to 800 percent, EPA has determined. More than 1 million tons of hydrocarbons and 12 million tons of carbon monoxide were spewed from the tailpipes of cars with defective emission control systems during fiscal year 1983. Studies show that most people who engage in fuel switching do so to save money—about 7 cents a gallon. However, these people are victims of faulty economics, according to Joe Cannon, EPA's assistant administrator for Air and Radiation. "In the long run, the use of leaded gas in the car will more quickly foul the spark plugs, wear out the exhaust system, degrade the oil, and foul the oxygen sensor in new cars, in addition to ruining the catalytic converter," he said. Cannon estimates that people who substitute leaded for unleaded gasoline will end up paying 12 cents a gallon in extra maintenance and repairs. (158 words)

Using cheaper leaded gasoline instead of unleaded gasoline in vehicles designed for the latter can result in a massive increase in tailpipe emissions. Instead of helping save money, the switch ultimately leads to

an increased expenditure of 12 cents per gallon on car maintenance and repairs, according to Joe Cannon, EPA's assistant administrator for Air and Radiation. (57 words)

The Clean Air Act of 1970, amended in 1977 and 1981, is one of the basic laws under which EPA operates. Its purpose is "to protect and enhance the quality of the nation's air resources so as to promote the public health and welfare and the productive capacity of its population." In order to do that, Congress authorized a national research and development program to prevent and control air pollution. The act also provided for EPA to assist state and local governments in the development and execution of their air quality programs. The Clear Air Act required EPA to set national primary and secondary ambient air quality standards for certain air pollutants. The law also required emission standards for mobile sources of air pollution (vehicles), and for new stationary sources such as smokestacks. In addition, the act called for regulation of hazardous air pollutants for which no ambient air quality standard is applicable. Another section of the law was designed to protect air quality in national parks, wilderness areas, monuments, seashores, and other areas of special national or regional natural, recreational, scenic, or historic value, and to prevent significant deterioration of air quality in those areas.

In achieving its purpose of improving the air resources of the nation, the EPA is guided by the Clean Air Act. It is required to develop research and development programs, assist governments in setting up air quality programs, set ambient air quality standards for hazardous mobile (vehicles) and immobile (eg. haystacks) pollutants. It is further required to give special attention to areas of natural, recreational, scenic, or historic value. (69 words)

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