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The Ethical Summary Protocol



The **Ethical Summary Protocol (ESP)** was developed at UAB by Jennifer L. Greer and Julia S. Austin to help research writers approach critical reading, note-taking, and summarizing *systematically*. When writers employ this kind of ESP, they remember more of what they read, synthesize that knowledge when writing, and waste less time. Basically it involves *drafting mostly from memory and your notes followed by checks for quality and accuracy*. If you do not use an ESP and pick up the bad habit of looking at the original text while you write, you will work more slowly (as a result of information overload), risk losing confidence in your own voice, and possibly write a summary or paraphrase that is too long and too close to the original article.

1. READ AND ANALYZE THE ORIGINAL TEXT

- Skim and divide the text into sub-sections;
- Read and analyze the topic of each sub-section;
- Highlight **only** critical (and easily forgotten) details (e.g., researcher's name, dates, stats).

2. TAKE NOTES IN YOUR OWN WORDS

- Make brief notes, or title-like summaries, in your own words, of the **key concepts**;
- Always connect key concepts with their sources (i.e., speakers or other authors);
- If you need to use the author's language in your notes, put it in quotation marks.

Remember: Technical terms do not need to be paraphrased or quoted.

3. DRAFT FROM MEMORY OR NOTES ONLY

- Hide the original text; do not look at it while you write; give yourself a chance to think;
- Draft your summary of key concepts from memory or your notes, in your own words, writing 1-2 sentences per sub-section. **Remember:** The mind is a good editor.

4. CONDUCT A R.A.P. TEST: Review your draft summary with the author's original text for **R.A.P.**, then correct and revise.

- Is your summary **Relevant**?
- Is your summary **Accurate**? Check the highlighted/underlined details first.
- Is your summary **Paraphrased** (in *your* words, *not* the author's)?

5. CITE RE: THE 3-STEP RULE

- Paraphrase, quote, or indent any original language/ideas from the author;
- Cite the original source in the paragraph;
- Cite the original source again in the reference list; check style guidelines for details.

Ethical Summary Protocol (ESP) Practice



Instructions: Take 3-5 minutes to read the excerpt from an online essay by Marc Prensky and take a few notes in the section below. Then fold your paper on the dark line so you cannot see the excerpt. Take 3-5 minutes and write a 1-2 sentence summary, writing from your memory and notes only. Then compare your summary with that of your peers and with the original excerpt. Is your summary relevant? Accurate? Paraphrased in your own words? Did you accurately cite and reference the sources? Did the ESP change the way you summarize in any way? Try the ESP with even more difficult passages and see if it doesn't speed and enhance your summary writing process and product.

[Today's college students] represent the first generations to grow up with (digital) technology. They have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age. Average college grads have spent less than 5,000 hours of their lives reading, but over 10,000 hours playing video games (not to mention 20,000 hours watching TV). As a result ... students *think and process information fundamentally differently* from their predecessors... "Different kinds of experiences lead to different brain structures," says Dr. Bruce D. Perry of Baylor College of Medicine. It is very likely that *students' brains have physically changed*...as a result of how they grew up.

Reference: Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon*. 9 (5), <http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/prensky%20-%20digital%20natives,%20digital%20immigrants%20-%20part1.pdf>

NOTES: _____

SUMMARY: _____

