

## 15. PRECIS WRITING AND SUMMARIZING

The word précis means an abstract, abridgement or summary; and précis writing means summarizing. To make a précis of a given passage is to extract its main points and to express them as clearly and as briefly as possible.

### **The essential features of a good précis are:**

It should give the main points and the general impression of the passage summarized.

It should be read like a continuous piece of prose.

It should be clear. It must present the substance of the original in clear language.

It should be precise and brief. Cut away all irrelevancies, omit all digressions and remove all unimportant details.

It should not be sketchy. It should be complete in every way. It should contain all that is important in the original.

### **Important points while making a précis:**

Write down in order all the important points of the original passage, which serves as a framework.

Keeping this framework before you, now try to write your summary. Write simply, clearly and briefly.

See that the parts of your précis have the same balance and proportion in relation

to one another, as do the parts of original.

It will be advisable to present the facts in the same order as they appear in the original.

If the length of the précis is not prescribed, about one third of the original is usually expected.

Choose your words carefully. Avoid all unnecessary adjectives and adverbs. Pay proper attention to important nouns and verbs that make your précis short and impressive.

The use of direct speech is to be avoided. The précis is written in indirect speech, after a verb of saying in the past tense.

Avoid figurative language, omit all metaphors and similes. Avoid redundancy and ambiguous words.

Precis must be connected whole.

### **Some Don'ts**

Don't write your précis in a very small hand in order to give impression of conciseness.

Don't add comments of your own or other irrelevancies. Don't borrow phrases and sentences from the original. Don't emphasize the wrong point. Don't exceed or fall short of the prescribed limit by more than five and six words. Don't make your précis a series of disjointed sentences. Don't be so brief as to become unintelligible. Your précis must be brief and clear. Don't use colloquial expressions, circumlocutions or rhetorical statements. Don't write bad English. Avoid mistakes in spelling, grammar punctuation, idiom and the like.

Don't use personal construction when summarizing. Avoid such phrases as I think, I believe, and in my opinion etc.,

**Make a précis of the following paragraph and suggest suitable title:**

1. Speech is a great blessing, but it can also be a great cur, for, while it helps us to make our intentions and desires known to our fellows, it can also, if we use it carelessly, make our attitude completely misunderstood. A slip of the tongue, these of an unusual word, or of an ambiguous word and so on, may create an enemy where we had hoped to win a friend. Again different classes of people use different vocabularies, and the ordinary speech of an educated man may strike an uneducated listener as showing pride; unwittingly we may use a word, which bears a different meaning to our listeners from what it does to men of our own class. Thus speech is not a gift to use lightly without thought, but one, which demands careful handling. Only a fool will express himself alike to all kinds and conditions of men.

2. Men are not made in the same mould, like a lot to bricks. It would have ill-suited the wants of the world if it had been so. Consequently, even in the same country, men differ in disposition, and inclination and manners, and opinion, more probably than they do in face or form. And between the people of different countries the contrast is even more striking. We have then, also, different sentiments, different sympathies, different hopes, different ways altogether. It will always be so. So long as there are different minds, there will be different views on all matters that admit of opinion. So long as there are different degrees of latitude and longitude, as well as differing circumstances there will be different interests different attachment and different habits. It behoves us, therefore, to cultivate a generous spirit of forbearance towards

those, of whatever race, who may think differently and act differently, from ourselves. Even though we may be convinced that they are wrong, if we know them to be sincere, we should still bear with them and give them credit for their sincerity.

This is the virtue of toleration or bearing with others when we may differ from them, or may not like their ways. Toleration should be shown in all differences of opinion on even the highest matters of life and death; and there it is of more value than anywhere else. When we cannot agree with one about a point of science, or philosophy, or faith, we can at least agree to differ from him, and there is an end. We must always remember that we are all likely to make mistakes and possess weaknesses, and that we ourselves need the same forbearance and sympathy. We are, besides, all of the same human brotherhood, and should, "like brothers, agree".

## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figurative language is associated with literature—and with poetry in a particular. But the fact is, whether we're conscious of it or not, we use figures of speech every day in our writing and conversations.

### The Top Figures

- 1. Alliteration:** Repetition of an initial constant sound. In this way language becomes musical.  
Eg: How high his honor holds his haughty head.
- 2. Antithesis:** The juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in balanced phrases.  
Eg: God made the country but man made the town united we stand divided we fall.
- 3. Apostrophe:** Breaking off discourse to address some absent person or thing, some abstract quality, an inanimate object, or a nonexistent character.  
Eg: Wild west wind, thou breath of Autumn's being.
- 4. Euphemism:** The substitution of an inoffensive term of one considered offensively explicit.
- 5. Hyperbole:** An extravagant statement; the use of exaggerated terms

for the

purpose of emphasis or heightened effect. Here is the smell of blood still; All perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.

**6. Irony:** The use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. A statement or situation where the meaning is contradicted by the appearance or presentation of the idea.

Eg: He is an honorable man (in fact he is not)

**7. Epigram:** A brief pointed saying. Eg: the child is the father of man.

**8. Metaphor:** An implied comparison between two unlike things that actually something important in common.

Eg: The camel is the ship of the desert.

**9. Metonymy:** a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated; also, the rhetorical strategy of describing something indirectly by referring to things around it.

Eg: The pen is mightier than sword.

**10. Onomatopoeia:** The formation or use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or action they refer to. The murmurous haunt of flies in summer eves.

**11. Oxymoron:** a figure of speech in which incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side.

Eg: James I was the wisest fool in Christendom.

**12. Personification:** A figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstraction is endowed with human qualities or abilities.

Eg: Opportunity knocks at the door but once.

**13. Pun:** A play on words, sometimes on different senses of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words.

Eg: An ambassador is a gentleman who lies abroad for the good of his

country.

**14. Simile:** A stated comparison (usually formed with “like” or” “as”) between two fundamentally dissimilar things that have certain qualities in common.

Eg: The younger brother is as good as gold.

**15. Synecdoche:** A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole, the whole for a part, the specific for the general, the general for the specific, or the material for the thing made from it.

Eg: Kalidhasa is the shakespeare of India.