

Rhetorical Precis Form

Precis is a French word meaning summary or abstract. It is very precise in form (thus the word, *precis*). A precis consists of four sentences which record the major components of a piece of writing: the central thesis, purpose, method of development, organizational pattern, and the writer's credibility. Precis writing should help you become more careful and critical readers. You must use the following format.

Sentence 1

states the writer's names, the genre of the work, the title, and its central thesis. It also contains a rhetorically accurate verb (e.g. "asserts," "suggests," "argues" etc) and a **that** clause.

e.g., In their journal article "Probabalistic projections for the recovery of the endangered cui-ui," John Emlen et al. asserts that the immediate acquisition of supplemental water to raise water levels in Pyramid Lake will assure the recovery and persistence of the endangered cui-ui.

Sentence 2

provides a brief summary of how the thesis is supported.

e.g., Emlen et al. support their thesis via analysis of an age-structured population simulation model in which vital statistics (fecundity and survival) are positively related to river flow.

Sentence 3

makes an assertion about the writer's tone and credibility.

e.g., The writers readily admit uncertainty in the demographic parameters, especially larval survival, and the relation with supplemental water and attempt to analyze the population model with a range of parameter values.

Sentence 4

states the writer's purpose

e.g. The writer's main purpose is to develop conclusions that are justified based on the current rudimentary knowledge base on the endangered cui-ui and encourage water acquisition now to delay or decrease the risk of extinction.

A complete bibliographic citation should accompany your precis.