

Scientific Article Summary

During the course of the semester you will be required to write three article summaries. This assignment is intended to help you learn to synthesize scientific materials and communicate the main points effectively, using plain language without too much scientific jargon.

The topics are as follows:

Summary: #1- Animal Ecology; #2- Plant Ecology; #3- Your choice!

The Assignment

After graduating Xavier you have become a famous scientific writer for the Cincinnati Enquirer . . . ok, ok your not there yet but this exercise will give you some practice!

Your job is to summarize a recent *primary* research article on ecology (within the last 5 years). This is a *primary* research article so no literature reviews or book chapters allowed! Your editor (me) has restricted your piece to three pages in length. This assignment requires you to condense a highly technical research article for the general public. Assume you are writing for the local newspaper.

Writing the paper:

The article summary must be **sent to me through e-mail** in Microsoft word format. It should be between **2-3 pages** long, double-spaced with 12 pt font. Begin the summary by giving the full citation of the paper. Then, below, write a clear and concise summary of the paper. This requires you to boil down a long and complex research paper to its essential content and significance (but this is your job as a scientific writer!).

You are writing for the general public. This means you must define terms and set up the reader with the necessary background material. All of the writing must be your own. **Do not** quote sections of the paper or cite other sources. In your summary, include at least a paragraph (more if necessary) on each of the following topics:

Introduction:

- Discuss the basic ecological concept or research question that was addressed by the study, and briefly discuss what was known about this concept or question at the initiation of the study (before the research was done).
- This section is critical to the review since most readers will not be knowledgeable enough to understand the reason why the study was done or the significance of the results that follow later.

Methods:

- How was the research done (what methodology was employed)?
- This section should not be too detailed since most readers will not be at all familiar with methods. However, it should be clear what was done and the assumptions made by the investigators.

Results:

- Briefly indicate what was discovered in the study.
- This section should also be short and basic. Do not attempt to itemize each result since most papers report many. Discuss the most significant results and indicate how they address the questions posed in your introductory paragraph.

Discussion and conclusion:

- How do the results of the research alter the field or change the concept discussed?
- What is new about the results?
- What remains to be done on this topic?