

# WRITING EFFECTIVE SUMMARIES

## A. Identify!

You can identify what you are summarizing in a variety of ways. The following are okay, better, and best ways to identify what it is you are summarizing.

OK:       The book  
          The film  
          The article

BETTER: *Painless Public Speaking*  
*Forrest Gump*  
“Going Under the Light”

BEST:    *Painless Public Speaking* by  
          Sharon Bower  
          The movie, *Forrest Gump*  
          “Going Under the Light” from  
          *Newsweek*, October 2, 1995

## B. Select a Verb!

acknowledges	evaluates
adds	explains*
advises	explores
answers	expresses
asks	features
asserts	furnishes
assures	gives
blames	identifies
captures	illustrates
clarifies	invites
classifies	judges
compares*	lists*
confirms	misjudges
confronts	names
confuses	offends
contrasts	praises
considers	predicts
critiques	presents*
demonstrates	proposes
defends	provides
defines*	recommends
denounces	shows*
depicts	simplifies
describes*	solves
discourages	suggests
encourages	supports
endorses	teaches
entertains	tells*
entices	traces

## C. Finish Your Thought!

The final part of the topic sentence is easy if you just ask yourself:

- What is the big idea?
- What is the big concept?
- What is the main idea of the item that I am summarizing?

Keep in mind that this is just your topic sentence and that you will be adding all of the facts in the body of your summary paragraph.

*Step Up to Writing* by Maureen Auman  
<http://www.sopriswest.com>

\*Verbs commonly chosen.

**A + B + C = TOPIC SENTENCE**    *Painless Public Speaking* by Sharon Bower provides a number of practical hints for people who are afraid of speaking in front of a group.

**BODY:** Create a fact outline. Then add those facts to your paragraph in sentence form.

**HELPFUL HINTS:** Use transitions only if they help. Summaries do not need a formal conclusion. If you force a conclusion, it might sound awkward. Also formal conclusions include opinions - you do not want an opinion in a summary.