Your notes

GCSE English Language: revision notes

Summary writing

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Start here: what the summary task asks

- In Cambridge IGCSE First Language English Paper 1 (Reading), Question 2 is a **summary** task on one of the texts. In 2(a) you write a **selective summary**, in your **own words**, as continuous writing of no more than 120 words. In 2(b) you answer a short question about the attitudes or ideas in the text.
- Selective means you only include the points that answer the question, such as "the dangers of visiting the desert", and leave out everything else.
- You get marks for finding the right points (reading) and for writing them concisely and clearly in your **own words** (writing).

How to do it

- Read the question twice and underline exactly what you are looking for.
- Go through the text and highlight every relevant point. There are usually more than you need, so aim for 10 to 12 separate ideas.
- Group similar points together, and leave out examples, repetition, quotations and the writer's opinions unless the question asks for them.
- Write in your **own words**, in full sentences and in a sensible order. Don't add an introduction or a conclusion.
- Count your words. Anything over 120 words won't help you, and a long **summary** loses marks for **concision**.

Writing concisely

- Combine points into one sentence: "Visitors risk heatstroke, dehydration and getting lost" instead of three sentences.
- Use general words for lists: "insects such as ants, flies and wasps" becomes "insects".

- Avoid copying long phrases from the text. Change the vocabulary and sentence structure, but keep technical words that have no simple alternative.

Common mistakes

- Retelling the whole text instead of selecting.
- Writing a list of bullet points: the **summary** must be **continuous writing**.
- Including your own opinion, or examples from the text instead of the points they illustrate.

Your notes

Key terms

Summary	A shortened version of the main points of a text.
Selective summary	A summary that includes only the points relevant to the question.
Concision	Saying something in as few words as needed.
Own words	Rewording the text rather than copying its phrases.
Paraphrase	Expressing someone else's ideas in different words.
Continuous writing	Prose in full sentences and paragraphs, not notes or bullet points.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is the word limit for the Paper 1 selective summary?
2. What does "selective" mean in a summary task?
3. Should a summary include an introduction and a conclusion?
4. Which is the best way to make a summary concise?
5. How should you turn "ants, flies and wasps" into fewer words?
6. Why should you use your own words?
7. What form should the summary be written in?
8. What should you leave out of a summary?

Answers

1. 120 words
2. Include only the points that answer the question
3. No
4. Combine related points into one sentence
5. Insects
6. To show you understand the text
7. Continuous writing in full sentences
8. Examples, repetition and the writer's asides

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

Free revision for GCSE and KS3 at lycolearn.co.uk. Some notes are for one exam board only, and say so in brackets.

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