

PRÉCIS WRITING

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**MRHS ENGLISH
2009**

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3/13/2009

WHAT IS PRÉCIS?

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- ALSO KNOWN AS AN ABSTRACT, A PRÉCIS IS A SHORT SUMMARY, NO MORE THAN ONE-THIRD AS LONG AS THE ORIGINAL PASSAGE, AND PERHAPS ONLY ONE-FOURTH AS LONG.
- OFTEN, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO EDIT YOUR PRÉCIS TO A SPECIFIC NUMBER OF WORDS.

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WHY DO IT?

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- IT IS VALUABLE TRAINING IN WRITING AND RESEARCHING.
- SINCE YOU MUST BE CLEAR AND CONCISE, YOU MUST CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY TO GET THE MOST MEANING WITH THE FEWEST WORDS.
- IT'S VALUABLE PRACTICE IN READING AS WELL. TO SUMMARIZE ANOTHER'S WRITING IN YOUR OWN WORDS, YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THE CONTENT THOROUGHLY.

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PRÉCIS REQUIREMENTS

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- A PRÉCIS GIVES ONLY THE 'HEART' OF THE PASSAGE.
- IT OMITTS REPETITION AND SUCH DETAILS AS EXAMPLES, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND ADJECTIVES UNLESS THEY ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT.
- A PRÉCIS MUST BE WRITTEN ENTIRELY IN YOUR OWN WORDS. AVOID THE TEMPTATION TO LIFT SENTENCES OR LONG PARTS OF SENTENCES FROM THE ORIGINAL.
- A PRÉCIS IS WRITTEN FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE AUTHOR WHOSE WORK IS BEING SUMMARIZED. AVOID SUCH EXPRESSIONS AS "THE AUTHOR SAYS" OR "THIS PARAGRAPH MEANS". ALSO, YOUR OPINION IS NOT REQUESTED.

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STEPS IN PRÉCIS WRITING

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FROM
READING
TO
WRITING

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STEP ONE

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- READ THE ORIGINAL PASSAGE CAREFULLY.
- TRY TO GRASP THE MAIN POINT.
- LOOK UP THE MEANING OF WORDS YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE.
- MAKE NOTES/UNDERLINE KEY PASSAGES.

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STEP TWO

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- WRITE THE MAIN POINTS IN YOUR OWN WORDS.
- EXCEPT FOR KEY WORDS WHICH ARE TOO IMPORTANT TO OMIT (INDISPENSIBLE), USE YOUR OWN WORDING THROUGHOUT.
- REMEMBER, THOUGH, NOT TO ADD OPINIONS OR IDEAS THAT ARE NOT IN THE ORIGINAL.

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STEP THREE

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- REVISE UNTIL YOUR PRÉCIS READS SMOOTHLY AND IS THE REQUIRED LENGTH.
- USE A PAPER CLIP AND ATTACH THE STANDARD \$20.00 COFFIN CORRECTION FEE.
- PUT YOUR FEET UP, WALLY; YOU'VE JUST COMPLETED THE PRÉCIS!

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PRÉCIS EXAMPLE

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FROM
ETIQUETTE FOR EVERYBODY (1952):
 CHAPTER 4 - CONVERSATION

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ORIGINAL PIECE OF WRITING

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COMPLIMENTS ARE SOMETIMES A PITFALL FOR THE TACTLESS. SOME PEOPLE CAN'T SAY A SIMPLE THING LIKE "WHAT A SMART DRESS YOU'RE WEARING!" WITHOUT SOUNDING AS THOUGH THEY THOUGHT ALL YOUR OTHER DRESSES WERE HORRORS. OR THEY WILL SAY, "I'VE ALWAYS LOVED THAT DRESS OF YOURS," IN SUCH A WAY AS TO SUGGEST TO THE OTHERS PRESENT THAT YOU'VE BEEN WEARING IT SINCE WORLD WAR ONE.

GRACEFUL COMPLIMENTS ARE A SOURCE OF PLEASURE. EVEN AWKWARD ONES ARE KINDLY MEANT. WHEN GIVEN A COMPLIMENT, ACCEPT IT APPROPRIATELY. DON'T SAY, "OH, THIS OLD DRESS? IT DOESN'T EVEN FIT PROPERLY!"

THERE'S A SUBTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "YOU HAVE SUCH BEAUTIFUL HAIR!" WHICH IS PRAISING A GIFT OF NATURE, AND "YOUR HAIR ALWAYS LOOKS SO LOVELY!" WHICH PRAISES THE OWNER'S CARE AND SKILL. SOME PEOPLE ARE EMBARRASSED BY ANY REFERENCE TO THEIR APPEARANCE, NO MATTER HOW WELL-MEANT OR JUSTIFIED. EVERYONE, HOWEVER, ENJOYS HEARING THAT HE'S LOOKING WELL. NO ONE (EXCEPT A HYPOCHONDRIAC) LIKES TO HEAR THAT HE LOOKS TIRED, PALE, OR ILL.

TOTAL WORDS = 166
(FIRST PARAGRAPH = 65; SECOND PARAGRAPH = 31; THIRD PARAGRAPH = 70)
OPTIMUM PRÉCIS LENGTH = 55 WORDS (1/3 OF ORIGINAL)

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PRÉCIS

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TACTLESS PEOPLE HAVE TROUBLE DELIVERING COMPLIMENTS EFFECTIVELY. THEY STATE THEM IN A MANNER THAT INSTEAD RENDERS THEM INSULTS. (18 WORDS)

ACCEPT COMPLIMENTS WITH THE GRACIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THEY ARE GRANTED. (10 WORDS)

MORE SPECIFIC COMPLIMENTS ARE DEEMED MORE GENUINE. WHILE SOME INDIVIDUALS BECOME EMBARRASSED UPON REMARKS ABOUT THEIR APPEARANCE, EVERYONE ENJOYS HEARING HE/SHE LOOKS WELL. (23 WORDS)

* TOTAL WORDS IN ORIGINAL = 166 WORDS
* GOAL PRÉCIS LENGTH = 55 WORDS
* ACHIEVED LENGTH = 51 WORDS

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IN-CLASS ACTIVITY

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• TAKE A ONE-PAGE ARTICLE FROM THE MACLEAN'S MAGAZINES IN THE ROOM AND CREATE A PRÉCIS OF 100-110 WORDS.

• RULES:

- USE THE INDEX CARD PROVIDED.
- MUST BE EXACT.
- NO OPINIONS.
- WRITE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW AS THE AUTHOR.
- MUST BE WRITTEN IN YOUR OWN WORDS.

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