



Summarizing a Lecture – Part 1

Online Learning – Study Guide

We have compiled several points for consideration to help you choose the method for summarizing lectures that is best for you:

What is the purpose of the summary? In other words – why bother or “what’s in it for us”? Before we decide to summarize, we should clarify the purpose. We can distinguish between two goals: **The first is focused on the process itself** – the actual writing of the summary during the lecture, and **the second is focused on the outcome** – facilitating memory for future learning. The method of summary we choose will be different in each case.

What is more suitable for us – writing by hand or typing? Each of the options has advantages and disadvantages, and research on the topic doesn’t offer an unequivocal conclusion as to which is preferable in terms of its contribution to enhancing knowledge (memory and comprehension). Writing by hand allows you to sketch and draw during the lecture, scribble and doodle, but it will be harder to file, conduct searches or use images and videos. Typing the summary on the computer makes all these possible, but it exposes us to social media and “disturbances” during the lecture. In addition, research shows that students who type tend to transcribe the lessons. Transcription is a passive form of learning and is therefore not recommended as a summarizing strategy.

What type of information do I need to summarize? There are roughly two types of information we summarize in lectures: Facts (for example, in history) and ideas and theories (for example, in psychology or philosophy). Of course, this is an artificial distinction and every subject has a different mix of the types of information. However, the choice of a method of summarizing will consider the nature of the material we are summarizing.

So, what should we pay attention to?

1. Whatever allows maximum concentration and fewest disturbances.
2. Whatever prevents “auto pilot” transcription.
3. Whatever makes it possible to take advantage of images, tables or drawing and sketching.