Writing Summaries

A. Understand the Source

1. Separate general ideas from specific ideas.
2. Separate main ideas from examples that illustrate or make clearer the main idea.
3. In your summaries, include only the main or general ideas. Do NOT include specifics or examples.
4. Make sure you represent the source’s ideas accurately.
5. Use an organization plan that makes sense to you. Do NOT summarize paragraph by paragraph.
6. Think about the whole essay before you begin summarizing.

B. Put the Ideas into Your Own Words

1. Change the sentence structure.
2. Do NOT use more than three words in a row from the source unless you put these words in quotation marks.
3. Do NOT use striking or catchy language unless you put these words in quotation marks.
4. Use quotation marks sparingly; try to put as many ideas as possible into your own words.