

Writing effective summaries

Three brief article summaries will be incorporated into your 12-page literature review paper. But you also need to reference three more articles and three scholarly books in your paper. A good way to incorporate the remaining references is to write one or two longer microsummaries. Microsummaries can be good for transitions between article summaries (usually putting just one summary in the text). They are also useful for offering notes supporting evidence or evidence in the context.

For microsummaries you will cite the authors, however, you do not spend time discussing the background, purpose, or detailed methods of the study. Rather, you state in one or two very concise sentences what was studied and the main conclusion. For example, see the following paragraphs that contain microsummaries.

This is an example of how to provide limited information and background information.

This type of drug taking is termed *simultaneous polydrug use* (SPU), and several recent studies have shown that SPU is very common among US college students (e.g., Bunnell et al., 2006; McCabe et al., 2005; McCabe et al., 2006a; Tynes et al., 2004). SPU is associated with a variety of serious problems, including progression to habitual drug use (Schmied et al., 2004), increased drug use and other risky behavior (McCabe et al., 2007), and drug withdrawal and resulting mental and physical health problems (Dicks, 2006; Mihai et al., 2006). While researchers have begun to investigate the prevalence of SPU and the specific drugs involved, much work remains. Systematic research on SPU, including the drugs involved and the variables that influence SPU, is badly needed (Duncan, 2005).

This example demonstrates a concise summary of an empirical study.

With respect to non-prescription drugs, Levy et al. (2005) examined reasons for the initiation of MDMA ("ecstasy") use in college students. Reported motivations for using ecstasy included positive effects on mood, desire for an altered state of mind, relief from boredom, desire to escape reality to have fun, and self-medication. Interestingly, all of the participants were polydrug users who self-administered a number of additional substances with ecstasy.

The following is an example of presenting information that contradicts or conflicts with previous research.

Other variables that influence drug use include personality characteristics. For example, one characteristic believed to influence drug use includes an individual's level of religiosity (e.g., Hammerstein et al., 2001; Palfrey et al., 1999; Stewart et al., 1994), but there are conflicting reports regarding the extent to which religiosity is associated with drug use, possibly due to the methodological problems present in the relevant studies (Sharma, 2000).