

What is a précis?

When you read something it is easily forgotten - especially if you read it once and wish to recall it weeks or months later. In studying Law, Citizenship or Politics you will read many materials (for example the textbook, case notes, internet materials and newspaper articles) that you will need to recall for class discussions and/or your examinations. In addition, when you read materials it is necessary to be able to understand, interpret and analyse it's meaning and any principles involved.

To do this, you need to précis what you read. So, what is a précis?

In simple terms, a précis is a summary of what you have read. To provide a summary you do not copy the exact words from the text. Indeed, the idea is to use your own words to describe the important elements of what you have read. In doing this, you will learn to recognise the important bits and then write those down for future reference. The act of summarising, in this way, will develop your reading, memory recall, interpretation and analytical skills - something which is vital for subjects like Law, Citizenship, and Politics. One simple method I often use is to skim read the entire text and then slowly re-read while picking out important phrases and sentences with a highlighter pen. To produce a summary, I then convert the highlighted words into my own words and file it for future reference.¹

To help start the development of this important skill, I ask you to provide a précis from the enclosed 'Study Skills for Laws' extract taken from the 'Department of Laws Handbook'.²

EXAMPLE

A short précis of the above ...

To remember and analyse something you read it is important to write - in your own words - a summary of what you have read. Doing this will improve your understanding of the subject area.

Please précis the enclosed.

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¹ Do not produce telephone text abbreviations.

² Available on the College Intranet and/or via <http://www.peterjepson.com/law/law.htm>