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# ENGLISH

## Précis Writing

### What is a Précis?

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A précis is an intelligent summary of a long passage. It aims at testing your understanding of the passage. As it is a summary, it is always shorter than the original passage. It expresses only the main theme as concisely as possible.

### Writing a Précis

#### DOs

- Read the passage carefully; more than once if needed.  
Make a note of the important points.
- Make at least two drafts—a rough one and a fair one.
- The rough draft has the essence of the original passage.
- The fair draft is a good summary of the main points from the rough draft.

#### DON'Ts

- Express your own opinion.
- Use a question in the précis.
- Use abbreviations or contractions.

Let us examine a few précis writing samples.

## Précis Writing Samples

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### Sample 1

There is an enemy beneath our feet—an enemy more deadly for his complete impartiality. He recognises no national boundaries, no political parties. Everyone in the world is threatened by him. The enemy is the Earth itself. When an earthquake strikes, the world trembles. The power of a quake is greater than anything man himself can produce. But today scientists are directing a great deal of their effort into finding some way of combating earthquakes and, perhaps at some time in the near future, mankind will have discovered a means of protecting itself from earthquakes. An earthquake strikes without warning. When it does, its power is immense. If it strikes a modern city, the damage it causes is as great as if it has struck a primitive village. Gas mains burst, explosions are caused and fires are started. Underground railways are wrecked. Buildings collapse, bridges fall, dams burst and gaping crevices appear in busy streets. If the quake strikes at sea, huge tidal waves sweep inland. If it strikes in mountain regions, avalanches roar down into the valley. Consider the terrifying statistics from the past 1755: Lisbon, capital of Portugal—the city was destroyed entirely and 450 killed; 1970: Peru—50,000 killed. In 1968, an earthquake struck Alaska. As this is a relatively unpopulated part, only a few people were killed. But it is likely that this was one of the most powerful quakes ever to have hit the world. Geologists estimate that during the tremors, the whole of the state moved over 80 feet farther west into the Pacific Ocean. Imagine the power of something that can move an entire subcontinent! This is the problem that the scientists face. They are dealing with forces so immense that man cannot hope to resist them. All that can be done is to try to pinpoint just where the earthquake will strike and work from there. At least some precautionary measures can then be taken to save lives and some property. (329 words)

### Rough Draft

1. Earthquake is one of the worst enemies of mankind.
2. It causes great damage as it strikes without warning.
3. Scientists are finding ways to combat the disaster.
4. Earthquakes cause great damage to life and property.
5. Statistics have reported that the intensity of earthquakes can be so terrible that they can move an entire continent.
6. Alaska moved over 80 feet farther west into the Pacific Ocean when an earthquake struck in 1968.

### TITLE: Earthquake—the enemy beneath our feet

**PRECIS:** An earthquake is one of the worst enemies of mankind as it causes great damage to life and property. Statistics have reported that the intensity of earthquakes can be so terrible that they can move an entire continent. Alaska moved over 80 feet farther west into the Pacific Ocean when an earthquake struck in 1968. Scientists are finding ways to combat the disaster, but the problem is that it strikes without warning, and only precautionary measures can be taken to save life and property. (84 words)

## Sample 2

Coffee is traditionally grown in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu in India. It is predominantly an export-oriented commodity and 65% to 70% of coffee produced in the country is exported, while the rest is consumed within the country. In the international market, Indian Robusta is highly preferred for its good blending quality. Arabica coffee from India is also well received in the international market. Coffee is an export product with low import intensity and high employment content. This is evident from the fact that more than six lakh persons are directly employed and an equal number of individuals get indirect employment from this sector. Arabica is mild coffee, but the beans being more aromatic; it has higher market value compared to Robusta beans. On the other hand, Robusta has more strength and is therefore used in making various blends. Arabica is grown in higher altitudes than Robusta. The cool and equable temperature, ranging between 15°C and 25°C, is suitable for Arabica, while for Robusta, hot and humid climate with temperature ranging from 20°C to 30°C is suitable. Arabica requires more care and nurture and is more suitable for large holdings, whereas Robusta is suitable irrespective of the size of the farm. Arabica is susceptible to pests and diseases such as White Stem Borer, leaf rust, and requires more shade than Robusta. The harvest of Arabica takes place between November and January, while for Robusta, it is from December to February. (240 words)

### Rough Draft

1. Coffee is grown in India as an export commodity in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
2. Six lakh persons are directly employed because of coffee as an export product.
3. Arabica and Robusta are the two varieties grown in the Indian market.
4. Arabica has more market value being more aromatic.
5. It requires more nurturing as it is prone to pests and diseases.
6. It is harvested between November and January, while Robusta is harvested between December and February.

### TITLE: Coffee in India

**PRECIS:** India grows coffee as an export commodity in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Coffee production employs six lakh persons directly in India. Arabica and Robusta are the two varieties grown in the Indian market and the former has more market value as it is more aromatic than Robusta. Arabica requires more nurturing as it is prone to pests and diseases. It is harvested between November and January, while Robusta is harvested between December and February. (75 words)

### Sample 3

When we survey our lives and efforts, we soon observe that almost the whole of our actions and desires are bound up with the existence of other human beings. We notice that whole nature resembles that of the social animals. We eat food that others have produced, wear clothes that others have made, live in houses that others have built. The greater part of our knowledge and beliefs has been passed on to us by other people through the medium of a language which others have created. Without language and mental capacities, we would have been poor indeed comparable to higher animals.

We have therefore to admit that we owe our principal knowledge over the least to the fact of living in human society. The individual if left alone from birth would remain primitive and beast like in his thoughts and feelings to a degree that we can hardly imagine. The individual is what he is and has the significance that he has not much in virtue of the individuality, but rather as a member of a great human community, which directs his material and spiritual existence from the cradle to the grave. (193 words)

### Rough Draft

1. Humans are social animals.
2. They depend on each other for necessities and social needs.
3. Humans use language to communicate with each other and further their mental development.
4. Humans are superior to animals as they live in societies that guide their material and spiritual existence.

### TITLE: Man and society

**PRECIS:** Human beings have their actions and desires bound up with society as they are social animals. They depend on each other for food and clothes and share their knowledge and beliefs, and use language created by others to communicate, which helps in their mental development. They are superior to beasts because they live in human society. An individual left alone since birth would grow utterly beast like. The human society guides man's material and spiritual existence. (76 words)