

## Unit IV

## COMPOSITION

## 1. PRÉCIS - WRITING

## Précis Writing

'Précis' is a French word which means 'precise' in English. It restates the main ideas or essence of a lengthy prose passage clearly, concisely and effectively. It helps scientists, officials, business magnates, scholars etc., to keep abreast of the latest developments as it takes less time to read a précis than a lengthy passage.

Précis writing is given more importance in the competitive examinations, as it is thought to be a good test of the candidate's intelligence and reading and writing skills.

1. Since a précis contains only the salient points of the original passage, the ability to judiciously select the essential, leaving out the less important, irrelevant and decorative details, is tested.
2. It requires a clear understanding of the content of the given passage.
3. The next requirement is the art of compression: compression of words as well as ideas.
4. Above all, the précis has to be presented in a lucid manner. The précis should have unity, coherence, clarity, smoothness and pass as an original passage. This tests the writer's vocabulary and command of the English language.

A précis is not a mere summary. A summary too is a brief account of the original but it includes important as well as

unimportant points. A summary may contain two or more paragraphs and could be of any length. A summary need not be so precise, abstract and structured as a précis is. But a précis is usually one third of the length of the original passage, written in a single paragraph and in reported speech.

### **How to write a précis?**

The initial steps of précis writing are similar to those of note-making. Read the passage well and clearly understand the content. Underline the important points. Understand the organization of the ideas, after a close reading of the passage.

Make a note of the main points of the passage organizing the ideas under headings and subheadings. Choose a title; choice of a suitable title can help in keeping the theme organized.

Write a rough draft of the précis with the help of the points noted down. At this stage do not look into the original passage. Do not make use of the sentences from the given passage. Use your own words.

Write in clear and simple language and in short sentences.

Read the rough draft carefully to check if all the important points found in the original passage have been transferred to the précis in the same order of importance. If it is longer than the required length, reduce the length by combining sentences or pruning the précis of unnecessary words and examples.

Now write a final draft.

The final draft should be one third of the length of the original. The précis should read like an original piece of composition unified, coherent and complete by itself. It should retain the tone and the spirit of the original passage. Finally, write down the number of words found in the passage and in the précis.

### **Do's and Don'ts.**

1. Précis should be written in indirect speech, third person, past tense, except when the original passage describes the eternal truths or contemporary conditions and problems.

2. Avoid repetition.
3. Do not quote from the passage.
4. Do not bring in your ideas or views.

**Read the following passage and make a précis of it.**

**Example - I.**

One of India's greatest musicians is M.S. Subbulakshmi, affectionately known to most people as M.S. Her singing has brought joy to millions of people not only all parts of our country, but in other countries round the world as well. In October 1996, M.S. was invited to sing in the great hall of the general assembly of the United Nations in New York, where representatives of all the member countries listened. This was one of the greatest honours ever given to any musician. For several hours M.S. kept the audience spell-bound with the beauty of her voice and her style of singing. When the concert was over, the entire audience stood up and clapped as a sign of their appreciation of the great singer and the great music that she had carried with her from an ancient land.

**Points**

1. M.S. Subbulakshmi great musician of India—pleased people all over the world with her music.
2. In October 1996 invited to sing in the general assembly of the UNO.
3. Audience spell bound — gave a standing ovation — in honour of her music.

**Rough Draft**

The great Indian musician M.S. Subbulakshmi, known as M.S., has enthralled people all over the world by her music. In October 1996, she was invited to sing in the general assembly of the UNO. It was an honour never given to any other musician. The spell - bound audience gave her a standing ovation at the end of the concert.

## Fair draft

### M.S. Subbulakshmi, the Great Indian Musician

M.S. Subbulakshmi's music has enthralled people all over the world. She was accorded the greatest honour of being invited to sing in the general assembly of the UNO in October 1996. The spell-bound audience honoured her music with a standing ovation, at the end of the concert.

No. of words in the given passage = 140

No. of words in the précis = 46

## Example - II

Quick reading is extremely important. In most occupations a good deal of reading is required. Top executives spend around four hours a day for reading. One has to find time to keep up with the knowledge explosion. Research suggests that the faster you read, the more you understand, may be because concentration is sharpened. When reading fast, we are devoting all our attention to the text and squeezing for as much meaning as possible. Fast-reading can be accomplished with regular practice. Reading can be compared to driving a motor-car. Driving slowly on a free way invites wandering attention but turn on a free way and accelerate and see how speed pushes distractions aside and forces improved concentration.

## Points

1. Quick reading is an important exercise
2. It sharpens concentration
3. Attention not diverted.

## Rough draft

Quick reading is an important exercise to enhance one's concentration in reading. Quick reading compels one to pay full attention to the passage to understand the gist of it. It improves by practice.

**Fair Draft****Quick Reading Enhances Concentration**

Quick reading is all essential ability to enhance one's concentration in reading in the world of knowledge explosion. It forces one to read with full attention to get the content of the passage. It improves by practice.

No. of words in the given passage = 110

No. of words in the précis = 37

**Example - III**

There are millions of people who drink coffee in coffee bars or restaurants all over the world. While drinking coffee they talk about the day's news or they just relax. The Coffee bar is a good place to meet people for a chat, and drinking coffee is a simple way to relax.

People also drink coffee so that they can keep awake. Students drink it late at night because they want to study. Lorry drivers drink it because they want to keep awake on the road. Most people drink coffee in the morning when they get up and after each meal. Coffee breaks are a good way to relax at work.

Coffee has a bitter taste and people usually drink it with sugar or milk. Some people like to drink their coffee black. In Italy they drink very strong black coffee. It's called espresso. There are some people who drink their coffee with warm milk, and the Irish have a speical coffee with whisky in it.

Coffee comes from coffee beans, and these beans grow on trees. Coffee trees need sunshine and water, so they grow well in hot countries like South America, South Africa, India and the far East. Coffee trees are very delicate and difficult to grow, and picking the beans is a long process. The workers have a hard job because they pick the beans by hand. This can take a long time. Which country produces the most coffee? Brazil, of course.

- Points**
1. Millions of people drink coffee to relax — coffee bars --a meeting place.
  2. People drink coffee to keep awake.
  3. Coffee has a bitter taste.
  4. Coffee can be drunk in many combinations.
  5. Coffee is made from coffee beans.
  6. The largest amount of coffee is grown in Brazil.

### Rough Draft

People take coffee to relax and go to coffee bars to meet others. They take coffee to drive away sleep. If it is drunk pure, it is black coffee. Some people prefer to drink coffee with milk or whisky. Only after much difficulty, coffee beans is obtained. Coffee is grown in large amount in Brazil.

### Fair Draft

## Coffee

People go to coffee bars to drink coffee, relax and chat. Coffee drives away sleep. Especially students and drivers take coffee to keep them awake. Coffee tastes bitter. Besides drinking it pure as black coffee, there are variety of combinations to drink coffee with. It can be had with milk and sugar or with whisky. Growing coffee trees and picking coffee beans are difficult jobs. Brazil is the largest coffee-producing country in the world.

No. of words in the given passage = 244

No. of words in the précis = 81

Read the following passages and practise writing a précis of each passage

### Exercise - I

Vehicular air pollution control has become a keenly-felt need today. It involves the control of the harmful gases produced by

cars, buses and lorries. Since automobile air pollution is quite serious in many of our cities, a concrete programme should be evolved to reduce these emissions. The discharge of pollutants, particularly the offensive black smoke, can only be attributed to inefficient engine performance. Improvement of engine performance will also lead to better fuel economy.

If we look at diesel alone, we find that it accounts for nearly 30 percent of India's total consumption of petroleum products. It results in a corresponding quantity of pollution. The main consumer of diesel is road transport. Control of vehicular pollution should be based on methods that are in keeping with sound operational economics. Fairly simple and inexpensive methods are available to achieve the desired ends.

## Exercise - II

Nationalism, of course, is a curious phenomenon which at a certain stage in a country's history gives life, growth, strength and unity but, at the same time, it has a tendency to limit one, because one thinks of one's country as something different from the rest of the world. The perspective changes and one is continuously thinking of one's own struggles and virtues and failings to the exclusion of other thoughts. The result is that the same nationalism which is the symbol of growth for a people becomes a symbol of the cessation of that growth in the mind. Nationalism, when it becomes successful, sometimes goes on spreading in an aggressive way and becomes a danger internationally. Whatever line of thought you follow, you arrive at the conclusion that some kind of balance must be found. Otherwise something that was good can turn into evil. Culture, which is essentially good, becomes not only static but aggressive and something that breeds conflict and hatred when looked at from a wrong point of view. How you are to find a balance, I do not know. Apart from the political and economic problems of the age, perhaps, that is the greatest problem today, because behind it there is a tremendous conflict in the spirit of man and a tremendous search for something which it cannot find. We turn to economic theories because they have an undoubted importance. It is fully to talk of culture or even of God when

human beings starve and die. Before one can talk about anything else one must provide the normal essentials of life to human beings. That is where economics comes in. Human beings today are not in a mood to tolerate this suffering and starvation and inequality when they see that the burden is not equally shared. Others profit while they only bear the burden.

### **Exercise - III**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy will always be remembered as one of the greatest reformers of India. He belonged to an orthodox Brahmin family of Bengal. As was the custom in those days, Ram Mohan's marriage took place even while he was a child. He continued to go to school after his marriage. He was a brilliant student. He learned many languages including English. He read the holy books of not only his own religion, but also of Christianity and Islam. He believed that all religions teach the same truth and that no religion is superior to any other.

A tragic event that happened in the family opened Ram Mohan's eyes to evil customs which prevailed in the country. He had a sister whom he loved very much. Her husband died and before Ram Mohan's eyes she jumped into the fire that consumed her husband's body. This was in accordance with the custom of 'Sati' which made it the duty of the wife to give up her life when her husband died. This event was a turning point in Ram Mohan's life. He decided to fight against the evil practices that people followed in the name of religion.

Ram Mohan was a good speaker and writer. He used his eloquence to attack customs like 'Sati'. Many orthodox people opposed him. But he went on fighting for the cause which he considered right. As a result of his efforts, the Government of India declared 'Sati' illegal.

### **Exercise - IV**

The first thing necessary to the pleasure of reading is that when people are young they should acquire the habit of reading. This is becoming more and more difficult. Before I was aware of things in the world, the penny post had already begun to make



a change adverse to reading, by consuming a vast amount of time in correspondence that was unnecessary, trivial or irksome. Railways have altered people's habits by making them move about much more. But railways have this compensating advantage that, although they take people much away from home, a long railway journey affords a first rate opportunity for reading. They are not, therefore, an unmixed disadvantage. But now things are changing. The motor-car is altogether unfavourable to reading. People consume more time in moving about than they did, and they consume it under conditions which, even, for people with good eyes, must make reading difficult, if not impossible. The telephone is a deadly disadvantage; it minces time into fragments and slays the spirit out of it. Wireless, with all its delights, is now being added as a distraction to divert people from time that might be given to the pleasure of reading. The cinematograph is another change in the same direction, and flying is becoming more and more common. All these things must make it more difficult for successive generations to acquire the habit of reading, and if that habit be acquired, to maintain it. Even before all these changes, it was not easy to maintain the habit, but it could be done. A further disadvantage to reading is the great development of picture papers. Picture papers are tending to divert people not only from reading, but from thought. Where one used to see people get into a railway carriage and settle down to a book, they now come with an armful of picture papers and look at the pictures with more or less transient amusement, one after the other, and so pass the time.

### Exercise - V

The art of pleasing is a very necessary one to possess; but a very difficult one to acquire. It can hardly be reduced to rules; and your own good sense and observation will teach you more of it than I can. Do as you would be done by, is the surest method that I know of pleasing. Observe carefully what pleases You in others, and probably the same things in you will please others. If you are pleased with the complaisance and attention of others to your humours, your tastes or your weaknesses, depend upon

it, the same complaisance and attention, on your part, to theirs will equally please them. Take the tone of the company that you are in and do not pretend to give it: be serious, gay or even fling, as you find the present humour of the company: this is an attention due from every individual to the majority. Do not tell stories in company: there is nothing more tedious and disagreeable: if by chance you know a very short story, and exceedingly applicable to the present subject of conversation, tell it in as few words as possible: and even then, throw out that you do not love to tell stories; but that the short-ness of it tempted you. Of all things, banish the egotism out of your conversation and never think of entertaining people with your own personal concerns, or private affairs; though they are interesting to you they are tedious and impertinent to everybody else, besides that, one can not keep ones own private affairs too secret. Whatever you think your own excellences may be, do not affectedly display them in company; nor labour, as many people do, to give that turn to the conversation, which may supply you with an opportunity of exhibiting them. If they are real, they will infallibly be discovered, without your pointing them out yourself, and with much more advantage. Never maintain an argument with heat and glamour, though you think or know yourself to be in the right, but give your opinion modestly and coolly, which is the only way to convince; and, if that does not do, try to change the conversation, by saying, with good humour, "We shall hardly convince one another, nor is it necessary that we should, so let us talk of something else."

## 2. DIALOGUE WRITING

A dialogue is a conversation or talk between two or more people. Every day we converse with different kinds of people. We talk to different people in different ways. The talk depends upon their age, subject of talk, etc.

So dialogue writing means writing an imaginary conversation or completing such a conversation. To write a dialogue, we should have some dramatic power as we have to express the ideas of two persons in the natural way.

**Study the hints given below.**

1. The dialogue should be natural and suit the persons, who are engaged in it.
2. It should be always lively and interesting.
3. It should be written in a simple language that is used in ordinary talk.
4. It should have short sentences and even a word sometimes.
5. It should have contracted forms like 'I don't.'
6. In English dialogue, question tags find a place.
7. Sometimes the sentences will be incomplete as there will be interruptions in the middle while we talk.
8. Colloquial words and phrases will find a place in a dialogue between persons.
9. Finally it should be read like a natural conversation between persons.

**Eg. Model 1**

### I. Two persons at the bus stop

Indira : Excuse me, What's the time?

Prema : It is half past nine.

- Indira : I am afraid I have missed the bus 102.  
Prema : Where do you want to go?  
Indira : I have to reach Vellore by 2 p.m.  
Prema : Don't worry. You have a bus at 9.45 a.m.  
Indira : Will it reach Vellore by 2 p.m.?  
Prema : It will take only three hours for the journey.  
Indira : Then it may reach by 1 p.m.  
Prema : I think so.  
Indira : Thank you very much.  
Prema : See the bus coming.  
Indira : Bye.

### Model 2

**II. Rewrite the following dialogue in full. It is between Gopal, a class pupil leader and the manager of a travel agency.**

- Gopal : We want a bus to Chennai.  
Manager : Yes, you can have  
Gopal : We are sixty five in our party  
Manager : Oh sure! We have a sixty five seater. What is your programme?  
Gopal : We start on the first of May and go to Madras. We stay there for a day and return on the third.  
Manager : That makes it three days. You can have the bus for Rs. 2200  
Gopal : Two thousand and two hundred? Can't you reduce it?  
Manager : All right. You can also visit Tirupathi for no extra charge.  
Gopal : Thank you.