While the saying above is probably intended as a warning against taking shortcuts, it could just as easily apply to writing a summary. Summarizing is a painstaking process, involving fully understanding the material to be summarized, determining the most important ideas, and condensing them in your own words. A summary may be a shorter way of saying something, but writing one can be a time-consuming process.
Focus on Summary: Choosing Relevant Detail

Police officers have to write reports on crimes, accidents, and arrests. It’s their job to write these reports as condensed yet accurate portrayals of the events that occurred. To do this, they must choose relevant facts to include in their reports—for instance, that a driver had alcohol on his breath and failed a roadside sobriety test. They also must omit unnecessary detail that doesn’t help readers understand what happened—for example, that the driver wore a blue shirt. Since police reports are legal documents and may be used in court, police officers have to be very careful in their summary of events and their choice of details. A blue shirt that is extraneous to one report may become important if the officer is trying to provide a description of a perpetrator who fled the scene of a crime. Officers must therefore be selective in their accounts, depending on the situation and the purpose of the report.

Whatever profession you choose to go into, you will need to summarize information to tell a boss, client, or coworker. Because you will not want to waste anyone’s time, including your own, it is to your advantage to learn how to summarize effectively and concisely.

Reflect on It

Consider all the different professions that interest you. In what ways do you see the art of summary helping you further your career in those professions?

Writing a Summary Report

A summary report condenses and presents information, often from a single source. When you write a summary, your goal is to concisely present information from an essay, article, or book so that your reader understands the main points. In a summary, present the author’s ideas objectively, without including your opinion of them. At the end of your report, if the assignment calls for it, write a brief evaluation of the essay, article, or book.

Five Steps in Writing an Article Summary

The following section shows you the steps in summarizing an article.
Step 1: Choose a Topic and Find Sources of Information

Your instructor may assign a topic or area of investigation, or you may be asked to choose your own topic. Choose a topic that interests you and on which information is readily available.

Articles on your topic may be found in periodicals, databases, or on Internet sites. An overview of each type of information source is provided below.

Periodicals

Periodicals are publications such as newspapers, magazines, and scholarly journals that are published on a regular basis—daily, monthly, or quarterly, for example. Newspapers and magazines are written for the general public, while journals are written for scholars in a particular field.

Subscription and CD-ROM Databases

Periodical articles are also available through subscription databases or CD-ROM databases. Most college libraries subscribe to databases such as ABI/INFORM, Academic Search Premier, ERIC, and Research Library. These databases may contain full-text articles from journals, newspapers, or magazines, or they may contain article abstracts. Full-text articles are complete articles, exactly as originally published. Article abstracts are summaries intended to help you decide if a particular article is appropriate for your purposes. If it is, you will need to find the original article in the periodical in which it originally appeared.

What Does the Suffix of an Internet Site Mean?

An Internet site’s suffix can tell you a bit about the person or group behind the site. Here’s a key to decoding Internet suffixes.

.org: A nonprofit organization
.edu: A college or university
.gov: A U.S. government site
.com: A business or private individual

Internet Sources

Some websites may contain articles previously published in print media; others may contain articles written for and published on the Internet. Internet sources
vary widely in quality; it is up to you to evaluate the credibility of each site you visit.

Advice for Online Researchers

Go Online
Research used to mean poring through stacks of books and periodicals. Today, it usually means sitting in front of a computer screen. Even print sources must be located through online catalogs, indexes to periodicals, and databases. These resources may still seem alien to you at first, even if you are comfortable using a computer. If you need help, do not hesitate to ask for it.

Find a Friend
Find someone in class who will agree to be your research partner. You don’t need an expert; nor do you need someone who is working on the same topic. All you need is someone who is willing to go through the process with you. The two of you can work side by side and handle the rough spots together.

Ask a Librarian
Librarians are experts in finding information, and they are there to help. Explain your project and the kind of information you are looking for, and a librarian will point you in the right direction.

Print the Information
When you find useful articles online, print them out so that you will not have to go looking for them should you need them again. Documentation of online sources requires that you note the database you are using and the date you accessed the information.

Be Patient
Be patient with yourself and with the process of finding information—it always takes longer than you think it will.

Step 2: Evaluate Sources of Information

Once you have found articles on your chosen topic, evaluate them to make sure they are suitable for your summary. Use the following evaluation criteria to find suitable articles.

• Length. If an article summary covers all the major points in the article, it will probably be 25 to 50 percent of the length of the article. Therefore,
if you are assigned a five-hundred-word summary, choose an article of between one thousand and two thousand words. These figures are only an approximation. The idea is not to choose an article so short that a few sentences can summarize it or one so long that you cannot summarize the entire article.

- **Readability.** In any article that you choose, expect to find unfamiliar terminology and concepts that are new to you. After all, the purpose of research is to learn something new. However, some articles are written for experts in the field and may be hard for a layperson to understand. If you read the article three times and still feel as though you are trying to comprehend ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, choose another article.

- **Publication Date.** A publication date helps you evaluate the timeliness of the source. In fields where change is rapid, such as medicine or computer technology, finding the most up-to-date-sources is essential.

- **Author.** Is the author an authority in the field? If not—if the author is a journalist, for example—does the author consult and quote credible, authoritative sources? These questions help you evaluate the authority and credibility of your source.

### Step 3: Read Your Article Thoroughly

Before taking any notes, read your article through once or twice. Then, highlighter in hand, look for the following information.

- **Main idea and major ideas.** Read through the article, highlighting the main idea and the major ideas. Remember, the main idea is often found at the beginning of an article and repeated at the end. Major ideas are often stated at the beginning of a paragraph or after a headline, and they are often supported by examples. Don’t worry if this step takes more than one reading.

- **Examples and supporting details.** Once you have found the main and major ideas, go back and highlight the supporting details and examples that most directly support those ideas. A summary contains a minimum of the detail that fleshes out the main idea, so be selective and choose only necessary and important details.

- **Information for the Works Cited list.** The final step in taking notes from your source is to write down the information you will need for your Works Cited list. In a summary of a single article, you have only one work to cite, but it is important to cite it correctly. A list of information needed for your Works Cited list follows.
For all sources:
- Author
- Title of article
- Title of the magazine, journal, or newspaper in which the article was published
- Date of publication
- Volume and issue number of periodical, if available
- Page numbers

For online sources, note the following additional information:
- Date of access
- The URL (Universal Resource Locator, or complete Web address) of an article from a website; or other identifying information such as site name or Digital Object Identifier (DOI)
- The name of the database for articles accessed from subscription databases through a college (or other) library, and the name of that library

Step 4: Draft Your Paper
Drafting a summary report is similar to drafting an essay. Your draft should contain the following elements:

- **Introduction.** The introduction includes the author’s name, the title of the article, and the central idea of the article.

Sample Introduction to a Summary

Interviews are crucial for both employer and prospective employee. The employer needs to find the best person for the job; the prospective employee wants a fulfilling job and perhaps even a career. In his article, “The Interview: Rights and Wrongs,” David Butcher describes techniques that can be employed by both interviewer and job-seeker to make the interview process easier and more productive.

- **Body paragraphs.** The body paragraphs outline the most important points in the article. The topic sentence of each body paragraph should state the idea that the paragraph will develop and incorporate a reference to the author.
Sample Topic Sentence

Smith believes that the Internet can be especially beneficial for senior citizens.

The inclusion of the author’s name in each topic sentence makes it perfectly clear to the reader that you are still discussing the ideas of another person rather than your own ideas.

The body paragraph itself will paraphrase the author’s ideas; that is, you will state the ideas in your own words. Quoting the author is also permissible, but use quotations sparingly. Most of the summary should be in your own words.

• Conclusion. The conclusion sums up the author’s ideas and presents your evaluation of or reaction to the article. Placing your evaluation in the conclusion is a way of clearly separating your reaction to the article from the summary, but if your evaluation is lengthy, you may place it in a final body paragraph before beginning the conclusion.

Step 5: Format, Proofread, and Cite Your Source

The final draft of your paper will include proper formatting and a Works Cited page. Use the documentation style recommended by your instructor, or follow the brief guide to MLA and APA style that appears later in this chapter. Your instructor may also ask you to provide a copy of the article you are summarizing.

Paraphrasing: An Essential Skill

One of the most difficult tasks of writing a summary is to put an author’s ideas in your own words. When you paraphrase, you capture an idea using your own sentence structure and your own words. Here are some pointers to help you when you paraphrase:

• It’s always permissible to repeat key terms. If the author uses the term “geriatric medicine,” there’s no need to rephrase it as “medical care of the elderly.”

• Unusual phrasings should be reworded. If the author refers to a spider web as “a spider’s gossamer trap,” a paraphrase should simply call it a spider web.

• The sentence structure of a paraphrase should vary from that of the original material.
Making the Switch to Academic Writing

As you move from personal writing to academic writing, you need a new set of strategies. Here are five helpful strategies for academic writing:

A Learning Approach
While personal writing allows you to write about the things you know best, academic writing requires a willingness to read, understand, and evaluate the ideas of others.

Objectivity
Personal writing is subjective—that is, it allows you to express your own feelings and opinions. Academic writing, on the other hand, is objective. It requires you to put aside your own opinions and to look without bias at the ideas of another person—even if you disagree with those ideas.

Knowledge of Key Terms
When you read and write about academic subjects, understanding key terms is essential. Make an effort to learn the meanings of unfamiliar terms. This essential step will help your comprehension of the article you are reading and will help you to use the terms knowledgeably in your writing.

Use of Third Person
When you write from personal experience, you often use the first person (I, me, or my). In academic writing, third person is preferred, even when you are expressing your own opinion. Thus, you would write, “Several of Emily Dickinson’s poems reflect an obsession with death,” not “I think that Emily Dickinson’s poetry reflects an obsession with death.”

Careful Acknowledgment of Others’ Work
If you are quoting or using the ideas of other writers, it is important to acknowledge your sources both informally within the text of your paper and formally through parenthetical references and a Works Cited page. Failure to acknowledge sources is called plagiarism and is considered cheating.

Exercise 1 Recognizing Effective Paraphrases

For the numbered items below, circle the letter of the better paraphrase.

1. Original material:
   From retail buying to bargain hunting, the Internet has revolutionized shopping. Shoppers used to be limited to the retail stores in their area; now, online stores across the country or even across the world are open to them if they have

   A
   B
   C
   D
an Internet connection and a credit card. Shoppers can find items that are not available locally and can compare prices to get the best deal. Bargain hunters no longer have to get up early and spend a Saturday morning scouring area yard sales. Now they can sign on to eBay or similar auction sites to find second-hand items in a variety of places, from Alaska to Nebraska and beyond. Both buyers and sellers have benefited from the availability of online shopping.

a. Because of the Internet, shoppers are no longer limited to stores within driving distance. Online shopping has made a wider range of goods available to both retail shoppers and bargain hunters. Online stores and auction sites have benefited both buyers and sellers.

b. The Internet has revolutionized shopping from retail buying to bargain hunting. Shoppers are not limited to items that can be bought locally. From Alaska to Nebraska, online shoppers can get better deals from eBay and other auction sites as well as from online retail stores the world over.

2. Original material:
The cat’s eye is different from the human eye in several respects. The first and most obvious difference is the shape of the pupil as it contracts. The pupil in the human eye is round, and when exposed to light, it contracts, retaining its circular shape. The round pupil of the cat’s eye, on the other hand, contracts from each side to form an ellipse. Unlike a human eye, a cat’s eye shines in the dark. The cat’s eye contains a reflective layer of cells that picks up and reflects available light, enhancing the vision of these nocturnal animals. A final feature that distinguishes the cat’s eye from the human eye is the nictitating membrane, an inner eyelid that serves to clean and protect the cat’s eye.

a. The cat’s eye is different from the human eye in the shape of the pupil as it contracts. The pupil in the human eye retains its circular shape when it contracts, but the round pupil of the cat’s eye contracts from each side to form an ellipse. Unlike the human eye, a cat’s eye shines in the dark. Finally, the cat’s eye has a nictitating membrane, an inner eyelid that cleans and protects the cat’s eye.

b. Though they perform the same function, the cat’s eye and the human eye are different in some ways. While the pupil of the human eye remains round as it contracts, a cat’s pupil becomes elliptical. The cat’s eye also reflects in the dark, something the human eye cannot do. In addition, the cat’s eye possesses a protective inner eyelid called the nictitating membrane.

**EXERCISE 2**

**PARAPHRASING SHORT PASSAGES**

Paraphrase the following short passages.

**Passage 1**

Aggressive driving is characterized by the tendency to view driving as a competition rather than as a means of getting from one
place to another. While most drivers are content to move along with the flow of traffic, aggressive drivers weave from lane to lane, seeking any advantage that will place them ahead of others. Aggressive drivers are also more likely to tailgate and honk the horn in an effort to intimidate other drivers or simply to move them along faster. When confronted with heavy traffic, aggressive drivers often engage in dangerous behavior such as passing on the right, using utility or turn lanes as driving lanes, and ignoring traffic signals. Paradoxically, aggressive drivers often pride themselves on their skill. They see other, more cautious drivers as the problem, not themselves.

Passage 2

The National Academies’ Institute of Medicine now recommends an hour per day of total physical activity such as walking, stair-climbing, or swimming. Many Americans fall far short of reaching this goal. Some are still trying to catch up to the previous guidelines of thirty minutes of activity five days per week. A century ago, Americans would have found it easier to exercise for an hour per day. Without cars, people walked more, and without modern labor-saving devices, life required more physical exertion. Today, however, many Americans sit at a desk all day and come home to sit in front of a TV or a computer. Even those who make an effort to exercise often find that they lack the time.
In a paragraph, summarize the following longer passage. Use your paraphrasing skills to condense the ideas in the original material.

**Developing Focus**

One of the most valuable skills a student can develop is focus. *Focus* is the ability to concentrate on one thing for an extended period of time, shutting out everything else. The person who is focused has no trouble with homework; her mind is on the task until it is finished. The focused person has no trouble concentrating during a test. She does not even notice the voice of the lecturer in an adjacent classroom, the tapping pencil of the student two rows over, or her instructor’s squeaky chair.

People differ widely in their ability to concentrate. Some seem capable of laserlike focus on any job until it is completed. Others are easily distracted, jumping up from homework to do a hundred small but suddenly urgent tasks as the homework gets pushed further into the background. Like any other skill, the ability to focus can be learned and reinforced through practice. To improve your ability to concentrate, start by establishing a set time and place to study. If possible, study at the same time and in the same place every day. Establishing a routine gives study the importance it deserves and helps make studying a habit. Then, to keep yourself on task, set a small timer as you begin studying. Start by setting the timer to go off after fifteen minutes. Until the timer goes off, give studying your full attention. If your mind wanders—and it will—pull it back to the task. Then reward yourself with something small: five minutes of solitaire on your computer or a trip to the refrigerator for a glass of iced tea. Time your reward, too—about five minutes should be sufficient. Then set the timer for another fifteen minutes.

As concentration becomes a habit, that habit will spill over into the classroom, too. You will be better able to focus on your
Using Documentation Styles

When you write a college paper, you will likely be asked to use one of two documentation styles: APA (American Psychological Association) style or MLA (Modern Language Association) style. In general, MLA style is used in fields such as English language and literature, media studies, and cultural studies. APA style is used in fields such as psychology, sociology, business, economics, nursing, and criminal justice. There are other documentation styles, such as Chicago style, which is used in fields such as art and art history, music, theology, and women’s studies, and CSE (Council of Science Editors) style, which is used in the sciences, but MLA and APA styles are the focus of this chapter.

Why Use a Documentation Style?

Documentation styles help you document, or cite, sources that you use in your research. One reason to cite your sources properly is to avoid accidental plagiarism. But the use of documentation styles goes beyond the need to
avoid plagiarism. Documentation styles have their own methods of formatting, titling, and spacing.

The driving force behind documentation styles is the need for consistency. Imagine if spelling were as inconsistent today as it was in Shakespeare’s day, when even Shakespeare’s name had several variants, including “Shakespeare” and “Shaxberd.” It would be easy to become sidetracked wondering about different spellings of a word or name and to lose sight of the content entirely. By requiring a particular format for your papers, your professors help ensure that style remains a background issue and content moves to the foreground.

In addition, when your instructors require you to use a particular style or format, they are preparing you for a time when you might be a writer yourself and be required to use the style that is required in your field. At the very least, your instructors are preparing you for a time when you will be required to adapt your writing to a particular style or format on the job. Every workplace has a format for writing memos, letters, and reports. Again, consistency keeps the focus on the content of those documents. In addition, just as academic writing has certain conventions that must be followed, workplaces, too, have particular writing styles. A police report would never say, “The low-down slimeball tried to get away from me, so I grabbed the sucker, and got him in a headlock.” Instead, an officer would choose factual, unemotional words, such as “The subject attempted to escape and was restrained.”

In addition to requiring a particular format, each documentation style requires a list of sources. The list of sources is an important part of your research paper. Ideas are the currency of the academic community, and a list of references in a standardized style makes it easier to share those ideas. You list sources so that other researchers in your field could go back to the original source, read it, and form their own conclusions.

**Brief Guide to APA (American Psychological Association) Style**

The following section outlines a few basic principles of APA style. For complete information on APA style, consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, available in most college libraries and bookstores.

**Formatting Your Paper**

- Use 8½-by-11 inch paper.
- Preferred fonts are 12-point Times Roman and 12-point Courier.
- Double-space the text, including the references page.
Preparing the Title Page

The title page will include a page header in the upper left corner, a page number in the upper right corner, and the title, author, and affiliation are centered and double-spaced in the upper half of the page, as illustrated below. The page header should be an abbreviated (one- or two-word) version of the title.

Referencing Sources within Your Paper

Within your summary, references to your source are parenthetical references, not footnotes. APA style calls for brief references enclosed in parentheses and placed immediately after the referenced idea or at the end of the sentence that contains the idea.

The following examples show the APA style of reference.

Examples of Parenthetical References

**Single Author**

- According to Steven Pinker (2002), the idea that parents are at fault if children turn out badly is an outgrowth of the “tabula rasa” or “blank slate” theory. This theory holds that cultural influence, not genetics, determines personality and character.
- The idea that parents are at fault if children turn out badly is an outgrowth of the “tabula rasa” or “blank slate” theory. This theory holds that cultural influence, not genetics, determines personality and character (Pinker, 2002).

Note that when the author’s name is used as part of the sentence rather than in a separate citation, the date follows in parentheses.
Two Authors

Skybo and Buck (2007) reported that children mentioned physical symptoms of stress, such as headache or stomachache, more often than emotional symptoms such as fear or anxiety. The authors say this occurs because children tend to report stress only when it manifests as a physical symptom.

Children mentioned physical symptoms of stress, such as headache or stomachache, more often than emotional symptoms such as fear or anxiety because children tend to report stress only when it manifests as a physical symptom (Skybo & Buck, 2007).

Note that and is used when the authors’ names are part of the sentence. The ampersand (&) is used when the authors’ names are part of a parenthetical citation.

The References List

In APA style, your references list, or bibliography, is double-spaced on a separate sheet headed “References.” Even if you are summarizing a single article and have only one reference, use a separate sheet.

Use the following model entries as a guide to preparing your references list. When there are two examples, the first is from an online source, the second from a print source.

Journal Article

No Author Listed


One Author


Multiple Authors (up to Seven)


In APA style, when an article has two to seven authors, all authors are listed.

Eight or More Authors


In APA style, include a DOI (digital object identifier) whenever one is available. If you include a DOI, you do not need a URL for Web sources.


When an article has more than seven authors, the first six are listed, followed by an ellipsis ( . . . ) and then the final author’s name.

Magazine Article


Newspaper Article


Article on a Website


Brief Guide to MLA (Modern Language Association) Style

The following section outlines a few basic principles of MLA style. For complete information on MLA style, consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, available in most college libraries and bookstores.

Formatting Your Paper

- Double-space the text, including the Works Cited page.
- Use one-inch margins.
- Indent paragraphs one-half inch.
- Do not include a title page. Instead, place your name, your instructor’s name, your course name, and the date at the top of the first page, each on a separate line, each line flush with the left margin. Center the title above the first paragraph. This material, like the rest of your paper, should be double-spaced.

Referencing Sources within Your Paper

Within your paper, MLA style requires parenthetical references, not footnotes. For a paragraph in which you mention the author’s name, the only parenthetical
reference necessary is the page number placed at the end of the paragraph. If you use a direct quotation, place the page number after the quotation.

**Example**

✔ According to Steven Pinker, the idea that parents are at fault if children turn out badly is an outgrowth of the “tabula rasa” or “blank slate” theory. This theory holds that cultural influence, not genetics, determines personality and character (16).

✔ The idea that parents are at fault if children turn out badly is an outgrowth of the “tabula rasa” or “blank slate” theory. This theory holds that cultural influence, not genetics, determines personality and character (Pinker 16).

**The Works Cited List**

Use the following model entries as a guide to preparing your Works Cited list. The first example in each section is from an online source, the second from a print source. MLA style requires that sources be labeled according to medium: “Print,” “Web,” “Interview,” or “Film,” for example. Online sources also include the database and the date of access.

**Journal Article**


**Magazine Article**


**Newspaper Article**


Note that the date of publication is followed by the date of access.

A Model Summary Report

For her summary report, Sandra chose an article dealing with college graduates and the job market. The article, along with Sandra’s highlighting and annotations, appears below, followed by the final draft of her summary report.

Graduated? Seven Job Tips for College Graduates

Susanne Goldstein

The job data might seem rosier, but finding a job is harder than ever—especially for the nearly 2 million college students who will have graduated this year. Newly minted college graduates are up against experienced mid-career professionals who are also out there searching. Use these seven career tips to change your job search into a job offer.

#7 Claim your career as your own

Here’s a secret: Careers don’t just happen, they are made. If you want to have the job and career that you want and need, it will take an enormous amount of work on your part. Many graduating seniors mistakenly believe that it is the responsibility of their career service officers to get them a job. Not true. Until you are ready to take charge of, and own, your career, you won’t have one.
Owning your career takes discipline and true commitment. Sending 20 standard cover letters and résumés to Monster.com and hoping for a response isn’t enough. To land the job you want, you need to make it your full-time job. Yes, this is hard—you have finals and papers to write, and friends to party with—but if you don’t work hard, you won’t get a job. Guaranteed.

Make a commitment to yourself and to your job search by claiming your career as your own. By pledging to do this, you will stop being a victim of the job market and will begin to take control over your future. This may sound hokey, but this symbolic act will help you accelerate your job search. Raise your hand and make the pledge.

#6 Know who you are and what you have to offer


When we decide to purchase a car, we consciously or subconsciously have certain attributes in mind that will make the car “feel like me.” That is exactly why car companies pour money into brand development, brand marketing, and advertising.

You are no different. As you go out and try to “sell” yourself to future employers, it’s essential that you know exactly who you are and what you want to be. By being clear about what you can offer to hiring managers, you will be able to get people to buy into the brand that is you.

Discovering your own brand is an essential component of differentiating yourself from other hungry job seekers. Think about what makes you different, what skills you have to offer, what you’re passionate about, and what you can bring to an employer that will make them want to pick you. If you were a car, what would be your best selling points? If you don’t know what they are, ask a counselor, a parent, or friend to help you uncover what makes you a great product for employers to buy.

#5 Say goodbye to “um,” “ah,” and LOL

It doesn’t matter how smart or qualified you are, if you can’t write, speak, and act like a professional, no one will hire you to be a professional. If you’ve never
learned to communicate in a serious and capable manner, it’s going to be very difficult to get hiring managers to take you seriously as a candidate. Here are some critical tips for communicating like a pro:

Practice conducting conversations in an articulate and confident way. Cut the words “um,” “like,” “you know,” and “ah” out of your vocabulary. Do your homework. Prepare and research a company, organization, or person before you speak or write to them. In written correspondence, it is never okay to use text-isms (ENUF, LOL, GR8) or other 140-character shortcuts. Double-check your written work. Typos and misplaced words reflect poorly on you. Follow up from all communications with written notes that show your appreciation, summarize the conversation, and suggest a next course of action. Be personable. People buy people. If they like you, they are more likely to want to help, and maybe even hire you.

#4 Reverse engineer the job market

Most job searchers today spend hours sifting through job listings trying to cook up ways to fit themselves into an existing job opening. This rarely works and is akin to finding a needle in a haystack.

What if you were to turn this model on its head? Instead of looking for specific job openings at various companies, use job listing sites to reverse engineer the job market and find specific companies where you want to work.

The goal is to identify the types of places where you believe you’d be a good fit. Most people coming out of college think more about skills they possess rather than the “fields” or “industries” they want to work in. Use sites like Monster.com, CareerBuilder.com, and Idealist.org, which provide robust company profiles, as a place where you can research the kinds of organizations that appeal to you. Learn what products or services they provide.

Think about who you are, and seek out places that are doing the things you want to be doing. Do NOT look to see if there are any current job openings. That’s not your objective right now. Your goal is to find out what companies you should be approaching as part of your job search—and the best companies for you are those where you feel like you’d be a great fit.

#3 Find “in” people—and build lasting relationships

If you find a company you really like, look at its website—specifically its staff, management, and board pages to see who works there.
Why? Because getting a job today is based as much on who you know, as it is on what skills and experience you have. Luckily, in a technologically networked world, getting access to people is easier than ever. Whereas in the past, knowing “in” people was confined to the privileged few who had enough influence to make connections, in today’s world, offline and online connections can be made by just about anyone, just about any time.

You need to embrace this reality to be successful at career development. With LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social networks, your circle of contacts is no longer limited to who you know; it’s now expanded to who those people know as well.

Take a look at the team pages on a company’s website. See if you can find someone in your networked-network that can make an introduction, or help you get an introduction. This is how you get “inside” an industry or a company and start building lasting relationships with people who are not only already doing the kind of work you want to be doing, but are recommending and hiring as well. Knowing these people is the absolute best way to get a job.

Sometime you’ll face a situation where you just don’t have a way “in.” In this case, gather your strength and make a cold call. Remember that to get what you want in life, you might need to step out of your comfort zone. Try new things and be a little daring.

#2 Network by 5s

Once you meet an “in” person, it’s time to start networking. Networking is a vitally important part of 21st century career success, and is something you should embrace, not something “fake” or “manipulative.” “Networking by 5s” is a technique that will enable you to build a network of supporters in lightning speed.

Here’s how it works:

Ask your “in” person to give you the names of five people who might be willing to share five minutes of their time to tell you about what they do for a living. Set up these “information sessions” with the intention of getting to know this person, and that is all.

Whether in person or on the phone, become an interested listener, and learn everything you can about what this person does, and how they got to be doing their job. Know that this meeting is not about you. Ignore your need for a job and focus on letting the person in front of you tell their story.
The funny thing is that by being a good listener and letting people talk about themselves, they’ll end up thinking that you’re wonderful. By showing genuine interest in them without asking for anything in return, you are giving them the affirmation that all humans need.

Because of this, they will take an interest in you, and when they do tell them a little about yourself and what you’re interested in doing. Share your résumé with them, and before the meeting concludes, ask them for the name of five of their colleagues who might be willing to talk to you for five minutes.

This technique, of meeting five people for five minutes at a time, is the absolutely best way to fast track your job search. With each successful meeting you have, with each new group of five names, you increase your career network exponentially by a factor of five. Within weeks, you can know tens of people who are doing the kind of work you want to be doing. When an opening for a job interview materializes, your new connections will be ready to recommend you!

#1 Be the solution to your interviewer’s problems

Interviewing is hard and scary. It always feels like there’s too much on the line and you’re nervous about getting the job that you can’t focus in the moment. With the right kind of preparation, you can make your interview anxiety melt away. How? By becoming a great teller of stories.

Do you freeze up when someone asks you to talk about yourself? Or asks you to share a past work challenge? The reason answering these questions is hard is because you don’t have a framework for your answers.

Aristotle gave us this framework when he first described the concept of storytelling in three acts. Good storytelling, he taught, has a beginning (the setup), a middle (the action) and an end (the resolution), and can be used to take listeners on a rewarding journey.

You can utilize this simple framework to become masterful at telling your own story, the story of your greatest challenge, and the best story of all—how you can be the solution to your interviewer’s problems.

In today’s work environment, hiring managers are overstretched and barely have time to hire the people needed to help them solve the challenges in front of them. Their immediate goal is to make the best, most appropriate hire and know that their problems are going to get solved.
Article Summary: “Graduated? Seven Job Tips for College Graduates”

The class of 2011, with roughly two million college graduates, faces fierce competition in the job market. Susanne Goldstein’s article “Graduated? Seven Job Tips for College Graduates” offers seven ways to stand out in a crowd of applicants.

Goldstein’s article is structured like David Letterman’s “Top Ten,” in countdown form. The number seven tip is “Claim your career as your own.” This is not a mystical mental process, but the act of embracing the hard work of sending résumés and setting out on the job search.

Tip number six is “Know who you are and what you have to offer.” This may seem simple, but Goldstein suggests that job seekers “brand” themselves much in the same way an automaker might brand a particular car, highlighting its most outstanding features. In a similar fashion, college graduates should know and market their own product: themselves.

The fifth tip concerns clear, effective communication. The article advises graduates to drop “um,” “like,” and “you know” from their speech before going on job interviews. After the interview, graduates should also follow up with written, carefully proofread notes that do not contain textisms such as LOL and GR8.

Tip number four, “Reverse engineer the job market,” suggests that instead of trying to convince an employer that she is a “good fit,” the job seeker should use career websites to find companies that would be a good fit for her. The best place to start the job search, the author
believes, is with companies that are in tune with the job seeker’s own values and interests.

Tip number three involves finding the “in” people. The author confirms what we have often heard: Finding a job involves knowing the right people. Through social networking and career sites like Facebook and LinkedIn, the savvy job seeker might be able to connect with all the right people.

Tip two in the countdown is the most complex, a technique called “networking by fives.” The job seeker asks one of his “in” connections for the names of five people who might be willing to give him five minutes of their time to talk about their work. This is not a job interview, but a further building of the network of people that the job seeker knows in the field or company in which he wants to be employed.

The final and number one tip in the countdown is “Be the solution to your interviewer’s problems.” How does the job seeker do this? By following Aristotle’s advice and becoming a teller of stories. Stories give a framework in which to answer questions and in which to make a point. It’s a way to speak of personal challenges and a way to be the solution to an interviewer’s immediate problem of finding the right person to hire.

Susanne Goldstein’s article provides much food for thought, and gives the reader new ways to think about meeting the challenges of finding a job. That is not to say that her advice gives any easy solutions. The art of storytelling may take years to master, and even eliminating the “ums” and “ahs” from speech is difficult, especially during a tense job interview. But every piece of advice is worth taking to heart and at least making a start on. These tips will work not only for a job interview but also for advancement throughout one’s career.
Summary Report Assignments

Summary Report Assignment 1: Summarizing an Article about Your Career or Major

Write a summary of an article that deals with some aspect of your chosen career or major. The article may be one about job opportunities in your field, or it may focus on a particular issue central to your field. Follow the step-by-step process outlined in this chapter to find your article, evaluate it, read it to find the main ideas, and write your summary.

Summary Report Assignment 2: Summarizing an Article That Solves a Problem

Write a summary of an article that helps you solve a problem in your life. Whether you are trying to find ways to save more money, impress an interviewer, organize your time, choose an automobile, or eat more nutritiously, dozens of articles await you in the library or on the Internet. Because articles of this type vary widely in length, be sure to choose an article substantial enough to lend itself to summarizing. Follow the step-by-step process outlined in this chapter to find your article, evaluate it, read it to find the main ideas, and write your summary.

Summary Report Assignment 3: Summarizing an Article That Explores a Social Issue

Write a summary of an article that explores a current social problem. You will find articles on homelessness, drug abuse, domestic violence, school violence, and many more issues of current concern in the library or on the Internet. Articles may vary in length, so be sure to choose an article substantial enough to lend itself to summarizing. Follow the step-by-step process outlined in this chapter to find your article, evaluate it, read it to find the main ideas, and write your summary.