

## HOW TO WRITE A SUMMARY OF YOUR MASTER'S DEGREE THESIS IN ENGLISH

Sometimes it is necessary to summarize an article, paper, book or some other kind of written text, such as your Master's degree thesis, i.e. to write a *summary*. You can also find the word *abstract* in the meaning of a *summary* (as these two expressions designate the types of writing quite close to each other as far as their function is concerned).

The Czech equivalent for an *abstract* or *summary* is "resumé". In Czech journals, scientific monographs, research papers or dissertations, abstracts can be found written in one or two international languages at the end of a periodical or a book.

The purpose of summarizing a text is to introduce briefly the format, content and conclusions to a potential reader so that s/he can decide whether or not to read the whole text.

The summary IS NOT just a set of sentences chosen from individual parts of the writing but it also describes the structure (e.g. subdivision into chapters, sections, parts, paragraphs, etc.), what the author's approach is (e.g. description, analysis, comparison, etc.) and what his or her conclusions are.

Writing your summary you should answer three basic questions:

**WHY** have you chosen a particular topic? You should explain what the aim / purpose of your research is and what your initial hypotheses are.

**HOW** have you looked into the issues? The methodology chosen, scope of research, and the structure of your work should be described here.

**WHAT** has been the outcome of your research? Briefly introduce results and conclusions you have arrived at.

The language of an abstract uses a limited number of verbs describing the content of a text. The following table lists the most frequent nouns and verbs:

article paper passage study text author thesis	analyzes, argues for / in favour of, argues that, attempts to, challenges, characterises, compares, concerns, concludes with suggestions, considers, consists of, contains, contradicts, deals with, describes, discusses, documents, endeavours, examines, explains, explicates, explores, focuses on, highlights, illustrates, includes, investigates, is about, is addressed to, is an analysis of, is based on, is composed of, is concerned with, is grounded in, gives, looks at, maintains that, makes recommendation for, mentions, outlines, points out, presents, proposes, provides, recognizes, recommends, refers to, relates to, reports on, reviews, suggests that, seeks to do, shifts the focus, shows, surveys, warns against.
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**You can also use expressions such as:**

*the aim of the thesis*

*the goal of the paper*

*the purpose of the study*

followed by the verb *to be*.

**Connectors expressing time sequences are:**

*first, second, third (fourth, fifth), last, eventually, finally;  
in / at this stage or step or process;  
then, next, during, before, after, following, subsequently.*

**Possible subdivisions of the text of a thesis:**

chapter, subchapter, part, subpart, sections, paragraph

**An example of a summary format:**

The purpose of my thesis is to analyse ... . The reason for my research is ...

The thesis is composed of five chapters, each of them dealing with different aspects of ... Chapter One is introductory and defines basic terminology used in the thesis: ... The chapter is subdivided into two parts. Part One describes ... and explains ... . Part Two deals with ...

Chapter Two examines relevant Czech legislation ... . The chapter consists of three parts. Part One focuses on ... . Part Two investigates ... . Part Three addresses the issue of ... .

Chapter Three is subdivided into two parts and provides an outline of relevant Czech case law. Part One illustrates the approach to decision-making by trial courts. ... . Part Two looks at decisions issued by appellate courts. ... .

Chapter Four concentrates on problems resulting from ... Part One describes .... Part Two recommends changes to be made in legislation ...

Conclusions are drawn in Chapter Five. ... The main aim of the thesis is to prove / rebut / maintain / expand my initial hypothesis has been reached. I suggest that ... (new legislation / an amendment / should be passed; courts should better apply the legislation; ...)

**Advice** 

The only task you have now is to feed the above example with proper information relating to your thesis and adapt the format of the example to its structure.