**Rhetorical Précis - How-To/Template/Example**

 A rhetorical précis differs from a summary in that it is a less neutral, more analytical condensation of both the content and method of the original text. If you think of a summary as primarily a brief representation of what a text says, then you might think of the rhetorical précis as a brief representation of what a text both says and does. Although less common than a summary, a rhetorical précis is a particularly useful way to sum up your understanding of how a text works rhetorically.

**THE STRUCTURE OF A RHETORICAL PRÉCIS**

* **Sentence One:** Name of author, genre, and title of work, date in parentheses; a rhetorically active verb; and a THAT clause containing the major claim presented in the text.
* **Sentence Two:**An explanation of how the author develops and supports the claim.
* **Sentence Three:** A statement of the author’s apparent purpose, followed by an “in order to” phrase.
* **Sentence Four:** A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.

**Rhetorical Précis Template**

**Sentence One (What?)**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

(Author) (A) (Title)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(B)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Sentence Two (How?)**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ supports his/her \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Author’s Last Name) (B) (C)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Sentence Three (Why?)**

The author’s purpose is to

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(D)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in order to / so that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Sentence Four (To Whom?)**

The author writes in a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_tone for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

(E) (audience)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **A** | **B** | **C** | **D** | **E** |
| article  book review  essay  column  editorial, etc. | argues argument  asserts  assertion  suggests  suggestion  claims questions  explains explanation, etc. | comparing  contrasting  telling explaining  illustrating  demonstrating  defining describing  listing, etc. | show  point out  suggest  inform  persuade  convince, etc. | Formal  informal  sarcastic  humorous  contemptuous  complimentary  ironic, etc. |

**EXAMPLE OF A RHETORICAL PRÉCIS**

El Cajon Valley High School senior, Jenny Dyson, in her essay “Don’t Take Valuable Space in My School,” *argues that*students who are unmotivated and misbehave take away from the learning environment and cause teachers to slow down and lower expectations. *She supports this claim by first*describing the types of students who “take up space” in her school; then, she makes a connection between her school’s poor performance on state and local exams and the “space-takers” who have done very little to prepare themselves for these high-stakes tests, *and finally*, Dyson challenges the effectiveness of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and outlines its limitations. Dyson’s *purpose*is to call attention to the flaws in educating all students—especially those who outwardly reject the opportunity—*in order to*prompt schools and districts to formulate practical solutions for low-performing students while taking care of those who want to learn. *She establishes*a formal tone for an adult audience of educators, politicians, and concerned parents who have children in high school, as well as reaching her peers - high school students.