



Northwind Theological Seminary

PRECIS PAPER

Following are instructions for writing a Precis Paper (which includes hyperlinks to additional information in blue). Be sure to check with your professor about any specific requirements or instructions they may have for you.

At the end of this outline, you'll find some basic formatting tips. Additional information and resources can be found on the [Writing Center home page](#). You can also [request one-on-one Writing Support](#) from the Writing Center director and staff.

A rhetorical précis is a type of academic writing where you summarize another piece of text, in particular its main ideas and arguments, to provide insight into its author's thesis.

When assigned to write a précis, make sure you understand its characteristics:

1. A précis is a critical summary of writing abstracts.
2. A précis is NOT re-writing or interpretation of the original.
3. It is NOT written with words from the original, though you are welcome to use some quotes if appropriate.
4. It summarizes the content of the original.
5. A précis reveals the meaning of the original and explains its value.
6. As a rule, a précis is 1/4 of the original in length, except as noted.
7. It follows the standard format: an author's thesis and methods used to represent it, results, and conclusion.

So, the process of précis writing begins with critical reading and research:

1. Read the original piece.
2. Specify its core points and arguments.
3. Consider the evidence used by the author.
4. [Research](#) what's new for you in the original piece: definitions, statements, words, data, etc.).

5. Identify the appeals the author used.
6. Evaluate how the author conveyed meaning.
7. [Restate the thesis](#).
8. Write a 1-2 sentence summary of each section in the original.
9. Describe it using your own words.
10. Reread the original and compare it with your summary.

Now it's time to start writing the final draft of your critical précis. Begin with paraphrasing the thesis and your 1-2 sentence statements, then review it to make sure you've explained the main point, identified the evidence, and used the logical structure.

[Click here](#) for more information.

Quick Tips for Paper Submissions at Northwind

Unless otherwise instructed by your professor:

1. Use 12-point font, in Times New Roman, Arial, Courier, Georgia, or Calibri (choose one).
2. Set all margins at 1".
3. Include a title page, with the title of your paper centered in the middle of the page. On the bottom third of the paper, center your name, followed by the name of the course, the name of your professor, and the date submitted.
4. Include page numbers for every page AFTER the title page, either on the top right, bottom right, or bottom center of the page.
5. Double-space the body of your paper.
6. Indent the first line of each new paragraph (don't use block paragraphs).
7. Include properly formatted footnotes throughout your paper AND a bibliography at the end.
8. Submit your paper in a *.doc or *.docx file format. Final papers should be submitted as pdfs.

Additional Formatting Information

Northwind uses a modified version of the Turabian style of formatting for all required papers in all courses. Turabian provides specific guidelines on the use of everything from title pages to page numbers, headings and subheadings, paragraphs, citations and bibliographies.

Please note: There are two acceptable citation methods within the Turabian style. One uses footnotes and a bibliography; the other uses parenthetical references and a reference list. Ask your professor which Turabian method is required for their class.

Correctly citing sources is important. It helps you:

- Avoid plagiarism
- Demonstrate academic honesty and courtesy for the work of others
- Build credibility by citing experts to support your arguments
- Allow readers to learn more about the topic by exploring your sources
- Allow others to conduct further research based on your work.

Whether you choose to use a direct quotation, summary or paraphrase, you must cite any information or ideas that are not your own original work. This includes but is not limited to words, images, computer code, charts and diagrams. Remember when in doubt, cite it!

To determine how to cite a source correctly, you can

- Find complete and detailed instructions in Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*
- Use Citation Machine or another online citation generator to format it for you.
- Google "how to cite _____ in Turabian." (Believe it or not, this is often the simplest, fastest way. There are THOUSANDS of websites that freely share this information in an easy-to-follow format.)

NOTE:

In Turabian, **bibliography entries are formatted slightly differently from footnotes**. The biggest difference is that in the bibliography, entries begin Last Name, First Name – whereas in footnotes, it's First Name Last Name. And in the bibliography, the publisher's information is not enclosed in parentheses. Again, please consult the Turabian *Manual* or a citation generator or the QuickStart Guide on the Writing Center home page for more detailed instructions.