

The Art of Summarizing

we recommend that when summarizing—or when introducing a quotation—you use vivid and precise signal verbs as often as possible. Though “he says” or “she believes” will sometimes be the most appropriate language for the occasion, your text will often be more accurate and lively if you tailor your verbs to suit the precise actions you’re describing.

TEMPLATES FOR INTRODUCING SUMMARIES AND QUOTATIONS

- ▶ She advocates a radical revision of the juvenile justice system.
- ▶ They celebrate the fact that _____.
- ▶ _____, he admits.

VERBS FOR INTRODUCING SUMMARIES AND QUOTATIONS

VERBS FOR MAKING A CLAIM

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| argue | insist |
| assert | observe |
| believe | remind us |
| claim | report |
| emphasize | suggest |

VERBS FOR EXPRESSING AGREEMENT

| | |
|-------------|---------|
| acknowledge | endorse |
| admire | extol |
| agree | praise |

TWO “HER POINT IS”

VERBS FOR EXPRESSING AGREEMENT

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| celebrate the fact that | reaffirm |
| corroborate | support |
| do not deny | verify |

VERBS FOR QUESTIONING OR DISAGREEING

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| complain | qualify |
| complicate | question |
| contend | refute |
| contradict | reject |
| deny | renounce |
| deplore the tendency to | repudiate |

VERBS FOR MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| advocate | implore |
| call for | plead |
| demand | recommend |
| encourage | urge |
| exhort | warn |

Exercises

1. To get a feel for Peter Elbow’s “believing game,” write a summary of some belief that you strongly disagree with. Then write a summary of the position that you actually hold on this topic. Give both summaries to a classmate or two, and see if they can tell which position you endorse. If you’ve succeeded, they won’t be able to tell.