**The Rhetorical Précis Format**

**a)** In a single coherent sentence give the following:   
          -name of the author, title of the work, date in parenthesis;   
          -a rhetorically accurate verb (such as "assert," "argue," "deny," "prove," disprove," "insist,"           etc.);   
          -a ***that*** clause containing the major claim (thesis statement) of the work.

**b)** In a single coherent sentence give an explanation of how the author develops and supports the major claim (thesis statement).

**c)** In a single coherent sentence give a statement of the author's purpose, followed by an "in order" phrase.

**d)** In a single coherent sentence give a description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.

**Rhetorical Précis (Student Example)**

Charles S. Peirce's article, "The Fixation of Belief” (1877), asserts that humans have psychological and social mechanisms designed to protect and cement (or "fix") our beliefs. Peirce backs this claim up with descriptions of four methods of fixing belief, pointing out the effectiveness and potential weaknesses of each method. Peirce's purpose is to point out the ways that people commonly establish their belief systems in order to jolt the awareness of the reader into considering how their own belief system may be the product of such methods and to consider what Peirce calls "the method of science" as a progressive alternative to the other three. Given the technical language used in the article, Peirce is writing to a well-educated audience with some knowledge of philosophy and history and a willingness to consider other ways of thinking.

See:

<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/rhetorical-precis/sample/peirce_sample_precis_click.html>

**RHETORICALLY ACCURATE/ACTIVE VERBS**

Here are some examples of rhetorically accurate verbs:

1. Ayn Rand championed radical capitalism.

1. Douglas Engelhart invented the computer mouse.
2. Galileo discovered sunspots.
3. Salk cured smallpox.
4. Jimi Hendrix redefined the electric guitar.

**Active (Power!) Verbs in English Academic Discourse**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Accentuates Accepts Achieves Adds Adopts Advocates Affects Affirms Alleges Alleviates Allows Alludes Amplifies Analogizes Analyzes Approaches Argues Ascertains Asserts Assesses Assails Assumes Attacks Attempts Attests Attributes Augments Avoids Bases Believes Bolsters Bombards | Challenges Championed Changes Characterizes Chooses Chronicles Claims Clarifies Comments Compares Completes Concerns Concludes Condemns Condescends Conducts Conforms Confronts Connotes Considers Constrains Constructs Contends Contests Contradicts Contributes Conveys Convinces Creates Critiques | Declares Deduces Defends Defines Defies Delineates Demonstrates Denigrates Denotes Denounces Depicts Describes Details Determines Develops Deviates Differentiates Differs  Direct Disappoints Discern Discovers Discusses Dispels Displays Disputes Disrupts Dissuades Distinguishes Distorts Downplays Dramatizes | Elevates Elicits Elucidates Embodies Empathizes Emphasizes Empowers Encounters Enhances Enlightens Enriches Enumerates Envisions Escalates Establishes Evokes Evaluates Excludes Exhibits Expands Experiences Explains Explicates Expresses Exemplifies Extends Extrapolates | Fantasizes Focuses Forces Foreshadows Forewarns Fortifies Fosters Functions Hints  Holds Honors Generalizes Guides Heightens Highlights Identifies Illuminates Illustrates Imagines Impels Implements Implies Includes Indicates Infers Initiates Inspires Intends Intensifies Interprets Interrupts Introduces | Inundates Juxtaposes Justifies Lampoons Lists Maintains Magnifies Manages Manipulates Masters Meanders Minimizes Moralizes Motivates Muses  Notes Observes Opines Opposes Organizes Outlines Overstates Paints Patronizes Performs Permeates Permits Personifies Persuades Pervades Ponders Portrays |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Postulates | Relates | Suggests |
| Predicts | Reinforces | Summarizes |
| Prepares | Rejects | Supplies |
| Presents | Remarks | Supports |
| Presumes  Produces Projects Promotes Proposes Provides Provokes Pwports | Represents  Repudiate  Reveals  Reverts  Ridicules  Satirizes  Sees  Selects  Serves | Suppresses Sustains Symbolizes Sympathizes Traces Transcends Transforms |
| Qualifies | Serves | Understands |
| Rationalizes  Reasons  Recalls  Recapitulates  Recites  Recollects Records Recounts Reflects Refers Refutes Regales  Regards  Regrets | Solidifies | Understates |
| Specifies | Unpacks |
| Speculate | Uses Vacillates Values Verifies Views Wants Wishes |
| States |
| Strives |
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When you write, use the active voice. Demonstrate clearly who is doing what to whom. Use rhetorically accurate verbs INSTEAD OF: "says," "states," "writes," or a passive verb.

**KILLER WORDS**

# Words to A**VOID** in academic writing. This is a starter list. It will grow! A lot Great

Very Definitely

Many Extremely

Things Nice

Lots Wonderful

Stuff Ways Really

Absolutely Amazing Awesome Interesting Bad

**Sentences borrowed from:** [**http://oregonstate.edu/instructfphl20**](http://oregonstate.edu/instructfphl20) **l/modules/bioprecis/bioprcis \_how\_do\_I\_write\_one.html**