Criteria for summary writing and outlining information

Summary writing or outlining information means that you briefly pass on the main information of a text to someone who has not read it. The language used must be neutral and objective, paraphrasing the author’s main points, views, and only the most important details.

Students may have to
a) sum up a complete literary or non-literary text, an excerpt from a text or
b) outline just certain aspects of a text.

a) Summary Writing
If you have to sum up an article, a short story, a novel or an excerpt from any of these, they are asked to present the main information from the original text in a condensed form.

PREPARATION
1) Look at the title, subtitle, source, any illustrations and captions in order to determine the text type you are going to work on, then anticipate what kind of information you expect from that particular text.
2) Read the text carefully.
3) Highlight key words and/or key sentences.
4) Divide the text up into sections, pay attention to subheadings and take notes.
5) In your own words, express the main points of each section/paragraph.
6) Do not include any minor details.

WRITING A SUMMARY
Include in the introductory sentence(s):
• the central idea/aspect of the text,
• the text type, the title of the text, the author’s name, the year of publication (if given). e.g. In the short story ... published in ... (author’s name) deals with...; The article ... by ... published in ... is about.../deals with ...

This kind of introduction is always required if the task is: Sum up the excerpt ...

Include in the main part:
• the essential aspects of the text, e.g. Moreover, the text shows ....

DO NOT INCLUDE:
• “I” and/or any personal opinion or comments
• quotations and direct speech
• minor points, examples, statistics or explanations
POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use your own words.
- Do not interpret; focus on information from the text.
- Do not offer any personal opinion on the text.
- Use simple present tense.
- Transfer direct speech into indirect speech: Greene (author’s name) says, claims, believes, suggests...
- If necessary, use linking words to show how the main ideas and supporting points are related.
- Shorten your sentences e.g. by using participle constructions. Instead of: After they have purchased the house, they realize ... write: Having purchased the house, they realize ...
- Count your words if there is a limit (e.g. Sum up in no more than 200 words).