

Can AI Save Me Time? Using AI to Summarize

If you've heard claims that AI can help with your productivity and you want to dip your toes in the water, here's a tangible place to start! Try using an AI generator to summarize that long article someone sent you to read, a newsletter, or a lengthy email.

To summarize a document, website or pdf, there are three free tools that I recommend: [ChatGPT 3.5](#), [Perplexity](#), or [Claude 2.5](#). There's not much difference in the output but I lean towards Perplexity as you can upload a document up to 500 pages (such as a pdf) or link to a webpage.

Try it by identifying a long text that you want to skim. Create an account and use prompts to help you get the desired amount of information. Consider starting here:

- What is the main point of this article?
- Tell me key words in the article.
- Tell me more about xx (if there is something identified in the summary and you are interested in more information).
- Try giving AI information about your role and context so that you get a more targeted summary: I am a university faculty member. Summarize this article and tell me why it is relevant to senior students in X field.

A few things to remember:

- AI generators are natural language processors so you can treat this as a conversation. Go back and forth with the tool, modify your prompts, and decide if the article warrants a closer reading.
- This trick is meant to save you time but it cannot substitute for depth.

One last idea: As you think about how AI could save you time, can you think of how your students might benefit from this strategy? This might be an easy and practical way to model thoughtful AI use to your students. For example, could summarizing with AI allow your students to sort through materials to identify a relevant source or something worth deeper reading? Could you demonstrate using AI to summarize a reading in your text and then work with students to assess the accuracy of the summary? Could students summarize readings using AI and use the summary to check their understanding of the topic? Of course, some faculty might be concerned that students will use this summary technique instead of completing a close reading. This may happen but I would rather a student generate a summary and read it than do no reading at all.