

## Prewriting for a Directed Summary

It is always important to look carefully at a writing topic and spend some time ensuring that you understand what it is asking. Your essay must provide a thorough response that responds to all parts of the writing topic. The writing topic that follows “The Benefits of Negative Visualization” contains three parts. The first part asks you about a central idea from the reading. To answer this part of the writing topic, you will have to summarize part of Burkeman’s argument. In other words, you will write a *directed* summary, meaning one that responds specifically to the first question in the writing topic.

first question in the writing topic:

*According to Burkeman, in what ways is “negative visualization” more likely to make people happier than “positive visualization”?*

Notice that the question doesn’t ask you to summarize the entire essay or simply to explain Burkeman’s definition of “negative visualization” and “positive visualization.” Rather, it asks you to explain Burkeman’s reason(s) for claiming that “positive visualization” undermines happiness, while “negative visualization” promotes it. The questions below will help you plan your response. They will guide you in identifying what you should include in your directed summary.

## Focus Questions

1. What does Burkeman mean by “positive visualization,” and what problems does he think can result from it?
2. According to Burkeman, what does a Stoic believe is the ideal state of mind, and how is it achieved?