WRITING STRATEGY

Checklist for Writing a Summary

1. Have you given the author's name, the text's title, and complete publication information?
2. What is the text's main idea? How accurately have you reported it?
3. Have you directly quoted key words or terms, perhaps even entire sentences? If so, have you identified direct quotations by placing them in quotation marks?
4. If you have included specific details (e.g., data or examples), is the information absolutely essential for the summary to make sense?
5. How long is it? If you've summarized a shorter piece, does your summary run more than 150–200 words? If you've worked with a longer piece, is your summary long enough to capture the spirit and content of that piece?
6. If you then use information from the summary as part of your own writing, remember that you must document it; that is, you must provide both a citation in the body of your essay and a reference to the source as part of a "Works Cited" page. For more information about documenting sources, see Chapter 12.

Compare this short passage by Otto Friedrich with the summaries that follow it. How accurately do the two summaries report the passage's contents?

In medicine, the computer, which started by keeping records and sending bills, now suggests diagnoses. CADUCEUS knows some 4,000 symptoms of more than 500 diseases; MYCIN specializes in infectious diseases; PUFF measures lung functions. All can be plugged into a master network called SUMEX-AIM, with headquarters at Stanford in the West and Rutgers in the East. This may sound like another step toward the disappearance of the friendly neighborhood G. P., but while it is possible that a family doctor would recognize 4,000 symptoms, CADUCEUS is more likely to see patterns in what patients report and can then suggest a diagnosis. The process may sound dehumanized, but in one hospital where the computer specializes in peptic ulcers, a survey of patients showed that they found the machine "more friendly, polite, relaxing, and comprehensible" than the average physician.

Otto Friedrich, "The Computer Moves In," *Time*

The following summary of this passage focuses on the computer's role in making diagnoses and, in particular, on the amusing idea that a computer may be more personable than a human:

In "The Computer Moves In" (*Time*, January 3, 1983, pp. 14–24), Otto Friedrich notes that computers are applied widely in medicine to enhance a doctor's diagnosis of a patient's symptoms. And while computers do not yet replace