

Paraphrasing

Using your own words to report someone else's writing, **but maintaining an academic style.**

When should I paraphrase?

- When a source's **ideas** or information, but **not** its **language, are important** to your argument.
- When you can state the ideas of a source **more clearly** or concisely than the original.
- When a source uses **technical terms** or complex expressions that are unfamiliar to your readers.
- When you want to **change the organization of ideas** for emphasis.
- When you use **many passages** from sources (so that you can avoid having too many quotations).

Steps for Paraphrasing

1. Read the text carefully.
2. **Underline**, or note, any **important** subject-specific **words**.
3. Look up any difficult words, and try to find **synonyms** for them.

4. Try to find **different ways of expressing** the information in the groups of words (phrases).
5. **Rewrite each sentence.** Try to simplify the sentence structure and the vocabulary without changing the meaning.
6. Put your text out of sight and write your paraphrase from memory.
7. Revise what you have written, comparing it to the original. **Your paraphrase should clarify the original, but be written clearly in your own words.**
8. Do not forget to use an **in-text reference** at the start or end of your paraphrase.

Paraphrase Strategies

Paraphrasing can be done in several ways:

1. By changing the vocabulary (verbs/ nouns)

Studies > Research

Mud > deposits

Society > civilization

e.g. **She examined the difficulties that ...**

= **She investigated the problems that ...**

Let's Practice!

- Smith and Jones (1991) found that the circumstances had...
- A reduced speed limit will result in fewer highway injuries. (Williams, 2000)

2. By changing the verb form (e.g. from active to passive; this can change the focus or emphasis)

e.g. John (1987) analyzed the students' difficulties and..

= The students' difficulties were analyzed by John (1987) and ...

Note: Using a passive rather than an active verb form here changes the focus from the writer to the research, i.e. the students' difficulties.

Let's Practice!

1. Brown and white (1994) observed the problems caused by seminars ...
2. Goodman (1989) has found a correlation between the increase in agricultural fertility and the shift away from traditional crops.

3. By changing the word class (e.g. from verb to noun phrase)

e.g. The reports were completed in April ...

= The completion of the reports in April ...

Let's Practice!

- “... no Arabic language science journal was consistently covered by the Science Citation Index in the mid-1980s.” Najjar (1988)

4. By synthesis: i.e. by combining two or more viewpoints or pieces of information from other writers

Example of a synthesis:

• John and Dudley-Evans (1980) touched on the problems created by the lecturer's use of colloquial words and phrases... This use of informal language was also noted by Jackson and Bilton (1994) who investigated geology lectures given in English...

Structure and Vocabulary Aid

There are many verbs and phrases that can be used to introduce quotations in writing. The following verbs and structures can be used:

As X	observes points out remarks says states affirms argues assumes	“ . . . ”
X	believes claims concludes explains finds implies maintains suggests	that “ . . . ”.

Examples:

- As X observed/ pointed out/ suggested/ noted/ indicated “ . . . ”
- According to X, “ . . . ”
- For example, X argues that
- X suggests that “ . . . ”
- The need for it is widely recognized: “ . . . ”
- To quote X: “ . . . ”
- Recent research by X shows that “ . . . ”

- X identifies ... as ...
- X defends his position by arguing that ...
- X attacks his opponents with his statement that ...
- X affirms his opinion that ...

Note that the 'reporting' verb can be followed by that ... (or this can be omitted).

Punctuation: there is no comma before or after that:

E.g. Fred Hein explains that each person's heredity is unique, except for identical twins.

How long should a paraphrase be?

- There is no set length, as it depends on how much of a writer's work you want to refer to, and in how much detail. In some cases, paraphrasing may simply involve reducing, or summarising, what the original writer has said into a single sentence:

The first published professional response to ape language studies was an article by Jacob Bronowski and Ursula Bellugi (1970). They argued that although chimpanzees might be able to use reference, they could not break grammatical units down to their units and recombine them (a process they called 'reconstitution').

- It may give a more detailed description of a writer's argument, consisting of a paragraph or more:

Levins (1968) used fitness sets to identify the optimal genetic strategy in response to environmental variation. The optimal genetic strategy is not determined solely by the nature of the environmental heterogeneity but partly by the perception of

that heterogeneity. For example, it is very unlikely that The general conclusion of these analyses of fitness sets was that fine-grained species would evolve a strategy of monomorphism, whereas coarse-grained species would maintain polymorphism.

(Note: for brevity, the dots indicate that 5 sentences are omitted; these provide the detail of the writer's argument.)

- You may want to give your opinion, or commentary, on the writer's ideas at the same time as paraphrasing them:

When Freud begins to discuss 'lapses of memory' in terms of repression, he seems to move on less firm ground. He does not, of course, claim that all lapses are due to repression. His concern is to show that at least some are and, to this end, he gives examples in which a name or a word is unexpectedly forgotten and proceeds to demonstrate that the forgotten item is associated either directly or indirectly with unpleasant circumstances. Here we may cite two of his most convincing examples

What language changes do I make when paraphrasing?

Vocabulary.

* keep the specialised terms that are related to the topic, or those for which there are no synonyms, e.g calcium, neutron, protein

* do not change proper nouns (e.g. names of countries and organisations), numbers, formulae

* for the rest of your text, use different vocabulary whenever possible, especially simpler phrases and more common synonyms and expressions. Using your own words makes your paraphrase fit in with the style of the rest of your text.

Grammar

* the grammar of the original needs to be changed, so that the points you are reporting on fit in with the grammatical flow of your text

* if your paraphrase is summarising and thus shortening the original, this will involve reducing perhaps 3 or 4 sentences (or more) down to one. This will require you to use a variety of subordinate clauses and adverbial or participle phrases.

Points to check in your own writing

- ✚ Are all my paraphrases relevant?
- ✚ Have I paraphrased the points from my sources accurately?
- ✚ Are my paraphrases of the right length? (not too short, not too long)
- ✚ Have I added my own opinion to the paraphrases? If so, have I made it clear what are the original writer's points and what are mine?
- ✚ Have I structured my paraphrases grammatically into my text, so as to maintain a natural and logical flow?
- ✚ Are they all properly referenced?

Example Paraphrase

Original Text (84 words)

Language is the main means of communication between peoples. However, so many languages have developed that language has often been a barrier rather than an aid to understanding among peoples. For many years, people have dreamed of setting up an international universal language which all people could speak and understand. The arguments in favour of a universal language are simple and obvious. If all people spoke the same tongue, cultural and economic ties might be much closer, and good will might increase between countries (Kispert, 2005).

Paraphrase (63 words, slightly shorter than the original)

Humans communicate through language, but because there are so many different languages people around the world have a difficult time understanding one another. Some people have wished for a universal international language that speakers all over the world could understand. Their reasons are straightforward and clear. A universal language would build cultural and economic bonds. It would also create better feelings among countries (Kispert, 2005).

Homework

Paraphrase the following text, making sure to follow the strategies you learnt in this lecture:

As a result of the unsound use of land, deserts are creeping outward in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Worse, the productive capacity of vast dry regions in both rich and poor countries is falling (Byrnes, 2007).