

Paraphrasing

To paraphrase is to write an idea in your own words, which means different words to those used in your source.

Reminder: The idea still needs to be referenced.

It is considered “poor form” to reproduce phrases or passages using someone else's words. In some institutions any direct quotations do not count towards your essay word total so your essay is short. Students who like reading and read a lot usually have fewer problems with paraphrasing.

The following is a famous English sentence which nearly all primary school teachers teach their students (in French, Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and more) and below it I have written a (horrible) paraphrase of it.

Original: The square on the hypotenuse of a right angled triangle equals the sum of the squares on the other two sides.

Pythagoras (c. 570–495 BC) in Greek

Paraphrase: When a three sided figure has one angle which is ninety degrees, two four sided figures each having four ninety degree angles and having sides with the same length as each of the two sides of that triangle adjacent to the ninety degree angle, will have areas which when added together will total the area of a figure having four ninety degree angles and sides the same length as the side opposite the ninety degree angle of the three sided figure.

John (b. 1947 AD) in English

In my paraphrase, I have not used the words: square, hypotenuse, right angled, triangle, equals and sum. The standard Pythagoras has 21 words and the John monstrosity has 82 words.

This is a good example of when to **use the original** words, known as a direct quotation, **not a paraphrase**.

Use a direct quotation when it is so **well written** you cannot improve on it, or it is so **famous** that a paraphrase would sound silly or confuse your reader. Example: do not write 'I can close my eyes and imagine' when you are discussing race instead of Martin Luther King's famous “I have a dream” phrase.

How to paraphrase - What you need to do to paraphrase

First, you need to fully understand the idea you are trying to paraphrase. **If you don't understand the idea DO NOT try to paraphrase it.**

1. You can change the vocabulary.
2. You can re-sequence the ideas.
3. You can exchange negatives and positives.
4. You can exchange cause and effect.
5. You can exchange active and passive voice
6. You can add to or omit any examples or descriptions, e.g. adjectives
7. You can combine any of the preceding 6 ideas.

To change the vocabulary, (1.) you can get help from a **thesaurus**, which should be used together with a dictionary. A thesaurus is a book which lists words with a similar meaning together. **If you have never used a thesaurus, look at one now.** There are many on the Internet and if you are using MS Word, there is one under the Tools menu.

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Examples of 1. to 6. above

	Original	Paraphrase
1.	Acid is combined with a neutraliser.	A chemical with a ph value less than 7 is combined with a neutraliser.
2.	Acid is combined with a neutraliser.	A neutraliser is combined with an acid
3.	Precipitation relies on many factors.	Precipitation does not rely on a single factor.
4.	The degradation is due to mould growth.	Mould growth caused the degradation.
5.	The keeper was mauled in the lion enclosure.	The lion mauled the keeper in it's enclosure.
6.	Organising a supply chain into materials such as iron and steel, oils plastics and wood and rubber and components such as bolts, transistors, gearboxes and body-shells is one method of studying the manufacturing process..	Manufacturing processes can be studied by considering a supply chain in terms of materials such as wool, rubber and steel and components such as bolts engines and seats.

Task 01

Number 6 above combines more than one paraphrasing strategies. What are they?

Task 02

Try to match the following pairs of examples of paraphrasing with the seven actions above and state if the paraphrase is AE (academic English) or GE (general English). Is it a good paraphrase? Try to give reasons for your answer.

A1. ... entrepreneurs. The two brothers were very different in personality. One enjoyed watching sport, analysing it, discussing strategy and technique and so on while the other was only really interested in participating in sport as a player.

A2. ... brothers invested in a business. The siblings were totally different in every way. The older brother was a watcher and the other liked taking part. One was only happy kicking the ball while the other was looking at position, ground covered and tactics,

B1. There are many ways to start a business depending on the owners motivation, available finance, time and technology limitations and so on but all of them require a structured business plan.

B2. In their book *Business Builder* Smith and Jones suggest that a well organised business plan is essential regardless of the reasons for initiating the venture Smith T., Jones Z.(2017)

C1. ... claimed "The guidance on non-accidental injuries in babies, pre-birth assessments and neglect has all been updated, while robust procedures have been put in place to check on the progress of child protection plans." but ...

C2. ... stated that stringent measures had been introduced to monitor the implementation of child protection plans and measures to be taken in the event of "non-accidental injuries in babies, pre-birth assessments and neglect" have been revised but ...

Paraphrasing

D1, ... most unlikely that measures to remove the provision of free school milk will be welcome by parents or teachers

D2. ... most likely that measures to suspend free milk in schools will not be welcomed by teachers or parents.

How to practice paraphrasing on your own, at home or when out and about.

1. Read any material, for example the magazine in the seat pocket on an aeroplane or Matilda by Roald Dahl. Choose a sentence with 10 to 20 words, and try to paraphrase it yourself using the seven strategies above.
2. Listen to any words from a movie or radio show just once and try to write what the performers said. You probably will not remember the exact words, but you just write the meaning and then say it. Just because you can't remember the words, it will probably be a paraphrase. Then say it different ways.
3. Read a sentence from the abstract of a Journal article you find. Try to write it in your own words.

When you practice this way, you will find number one easiest because you will probably be interested and you will not be under pressure because it is not difficult study.

Focusing on the meaning of what you hear, not the words will make speaking it seem more natural and able to use any words.

Journal articles use many words with complex meanings so you will have to use a dictionary and it feels like study so you will think of it as difficult. It is not difficult, it is just new to you.