



Paraphrasing a sentence

Introduction

During your time at University you will be required to provide evidence to support your claims. This will involve using information from academic sources (such as books and journals) in your writing. In doing this, it is important to be able to reproduce this information in your own words. This key academic skill is known as paraphrasing.

This resource outlines the importance of paraphrasing, techniques that you can employ and some of the potential pitfalls to avoid.

Why is paraphrasing important?

There are four reasons why you should paraphrase;

- i. To demonstrate your understanding of the source
- ii. To better incorporate the information in to your discussion
- iii. To ensure you avoid plagiarism
- iv. To emphasise a particular point from information found in a source

When might I need to paraphrase?

Most assignments require students to provide evidence from a range of academic sources. Your lecturers will want to see you demonstrate an understanding of this information, and paraphrasing allows you to do this. You should paraphrase text when the meaning of the source is more important than the actual wording (so you would not normally paraphrase a technical definition). This allows you to reproduce this information in your own words focusing on specific details.

How do I effectively paraphrase?

There are three techniques you can employ;

- 1) Change the words (vocabulary)
- 2) Change the word form
- 3) Change the structure

You should use all of these techniques when paraphrasing (never just change a few words and retain the sentence structure – this will mean the writing remains too similar to the original). This will ensure you create sentences that are in your own words, while still retaining the original meaning.

For illustrative purposes the following examples show how each individual technique can be applied.

How do I change the words (vocabulary) when paraphrasing?

Use synonyms

You can change the words by finding others with the same meaning (**synonyms**).

Worked example:

ORIGINAL: Students found many aspects of the online library difficult to comprehend (Smith, 2009, p.221)

NEW: Smith (2009) reported that learners reported many parts of the online library were challenging to understand

How this was done:

Original	Replaced with synonym
students	learners
found	reported
aspects	parts
difficult	challenging
comprehend	understand

Use antonyms

You can also change the words by finding words with the opposite meaning (**antonyms**)

Worked example:

ORIGINAL: Students found many aspects of the online library difficult to comprehend (Smith, 2009, p.221)

NEW: Smith (2009) reported that learners felt many parts of the online library were not easy to comprehend

How this was done:

Original	Replaced with antonym
difficult to	were not easy to

How do I change the word form when paraphrasing (nouns / adjectives / verbs)

You can change the form by using some of the same words, but in a different form

Worked example:

ORIGINAL: The rate of manufacturing increased in line with an expansion in the mobile industry (Hendon, 2002, p.486).

NEW: Hendon (2002) described how an increase in the rate of manufacturing occurred in line with the mobile industry expanding

How this was done:

Original	Replaced with new word form
increased	increase
expansion	expanding

How do I change the structure when paraphrasing?

You can change the structure of the source by changing from an active to a passive. Passive structures are more common in academic writing.

Worked example:

ORIGINAL: The findings from the study demonstrated the relationship between employee job satisfaction and productivity (Crusco, 2012, p.673).

NEW: Crusco (2012) outlines how the relationship between employee job satisfaction and productivity was demonstrated in the study.

How this was done:

Original	Replaced with new structure
'the study demonstrated'	' was demonstrated in the study'

Potential pitfalls to avoid

- Relying on a single paraphrasing technique – never just change a couple of words and retain the original sentence structure.
- Paraphrasing the text but change the meaning
- Failing to keep notes when doing your research so you can't remember which source you need to reference
- Incorrectly assuming a piece of information is common knowledge and doesn't need to be referenced
- Failing to link the piece of paraphrasing to the rest of the paragraph

Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information visit:

lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub

