



Paraphrasing, Summarising & Quoting

This guide will introduce you to some techniques that can be used to make your use of academic literature more effectively in your written assignments. Please note that this guide has been produced in accordance with the APA Referencing guidelines, so please consult your referencing style guide for all other referencing conventions.

Paraphrasing

What is paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing is the expression of meaning or ideas using different words, especially in order to achieve greater clarity. In academic writing, paraphrasing is a technique that should be employed regularly, as we use the ideas of others, but need to present them in a way that emphasises our argument or purpose, whilst not detracting from the content. If you paraphrase in your academic work, you still need to include a reference, as although the words have changed, the underlying idea or concept is still the intellectual property of the original author. The majority of evidence from the literature used in your essays should be paraphrased: you should reserve direct quotes for those key points that you need to use for emphasis or other specific purposes.

Components of a good paraphrase

- ⊗ Retains and honours the original meaning
- ⊗ Demonstrates your subject synthesis
- ⊗ Always acknowledges the original source

How to paraphrase

Here are some techniques you can use to craft a good paraphrase. Remember, a good paraphrase honours the original meaning of the source, so you may find that you need to use a combination of all three techniques to make your paraphrase more effective, and a lot different to the original quote.

Use synonyms

Synonyms are words that have similar meanings, so can be used interchangeably. It is worth consulting a Thesaurus for this technique, to look at a variety of alternative words, and to ensure that the replacements are suitable to the style and tone of the essay.

Example 1.1

Soller (2010, p. 12) states that 'Companies that show a genuine interest in charitable activities can earn the respect of the buying public.'

Paraphrased:

Businesses that demonstrate a real interest in not-for-profit activities can gain the respect of consumers (Soller, 2010).

(Example taken from Harrison, Jakeman & Paterson, 2016)

Change the form of words

In the English language, certain words can be expressed as nouns, adjectives, verbs or adverbs; depending on their morphology. You can change the form of a word to enable an effective paraphrase.

Example 1.2

Michaels (2009, p. 100) states that: 'Some charities owe their success to the selective use of consultants.'

Paraphrased:

Some charities are more successful as consultants are employed selectively (Michaels, 2009).

(Example taken from Harrison, Jakeman & Paterson, 2016)

Change the grammatical structure of the original

This includes changing positive constructions into negative constructions (as below), swapping the order of information, changing active sentences into passive sentences or varying clause structure. It is worth noting that the tense might change in your paraphrase, but you should always make sure that the tense in use is appropriate for your purposes.

Example 1.3

Polson (2009, p.34) states: 'Persuading the public to sign up to monthly donations is a more cost-effective policy than collecting single contributions.'

Paraphrased:

Collecting single contributions is not as effective as persuading the public to sign up to monthly donations (Polson, 2009).

(Example taken from Harrison, Jakeman & Paterson, 2016)

Combine all three

An effective paraphrase will combine all three techniques, so that the words and structure of the original text is changed, but the essence and the meaning of the original text is still intelligible. You will not need to make substitutions for subject-specific terminology when you paraphrase, as you are expected to demonstrate your use of these terms and apply them in the essay writing context. Here is an example of a good paraphrase, that makes use of all the aforementioned techniques. You will note that certain words have not been substituted to retain subject-specific vocabulary or collective terminology (underlined):

Example 1.4

"The police already use social media as a direct channel for engagement with the public. It is currently being used as a constant and reassuring contact, sharing accurate information and dispelling rumours. It can also allow citizens and the police to work together to make society safer" (DEMOS, 2013, p.6).

Paraphrased

The police force utilises social media as a way of communicating directly with citizens. At present, this tool is used for many purposes, such as the reinforcement of community support, the distribution of information essential to the public, and the dismissal of potential disinformation. It also encourages a partnership between the police and the public, to achieve community safety (DEMOS, 2013, p. 6).

Summarising

What is a summary?

A summary is a technique used in academic writing that takes a large amount of information, and reduces it to a small number of phrases, to paint a picture of the original text for the reader. Summaries are not used to detail or expand; they are used to succinctly capture important information in a manageable way; so that the reader doesn't have to sift through irrelevant information. Summarising is like paraphrasing, so it still requires a reference when conducted in your academic work. It is an excellent technique to apply when you want to avoid being too descriptive in your essay writing (Day, 2018).

Components of a good summary

- Transforms a large amount of information into a smaller volume
- Captures the points that are salient to your argument
- Demonstrates your understanding of a concept in a succinct way

How to summarise

Here are a few techniques to use to create a good summary. It is important to note that summarising can be applied in your essays in order to provide your reader with a brief background on a concept, theory or study. However, these techniques can also be applied when you have been asked to write a summary on a topic, text or theme.

Map a concept with bullet points

Try reading a chunk of text (or an entire research paper) without taking notes. Once complete, write the three main things that you have remembered about the reading, and use that to craft your summary, or use the suggested framework below.

Example 2.1

Introduction Sentence: In [name of book], [author] explains [insert main idea]

Supporting Arguments: [Author] supports this view by pointing out [insert author's supporting arguments].

Final Point: In addition, [insert author's overarching argument and point].

Summary:

In "My Favorite Shoe," Treyvon Jones explains that Nike shoes are the best brand of running shoe for serious track athletes. Jones supports this view by pointing out that Nike shoes are more comfortable, last longer, and provide more cushioning for the feet. In addition, Jones points out that most professional runners use Nike (2006, p. 45).

(Example taken from Kearny, 2018)

True Summary or Interpretive Summary?

The difference between true summary and interpretive summary is as follows:

True summary concisely recaps the main point and key supporting points of an analytical source or the main subject and key features of a visual source. . . Interpretive summary simultaneously informs your reader of the content of your source and makes a point about it . . . giving the reader hints about your assessment of the source. . .It is thus best suited to descriptions of primary sources that you plan to analyse.

(The Harvard Writing Center, 2000)

Example 2.1 demonstrates a true summary. When writing an essay, it is likely that you will need to use one, if not both kinds of summary techniques; particularly to achieve a balance between description, analysis and evaluation. The interpretive summary is a critical summary, as you condense and assess a source as a whole. This can be particularly helpful when you need to critique or discuss a theory, as you can outline the main features, whilst highlighting any flaws or areas for further discussion. However, it is important to note that if you produce an interpretive summary, you should be mindful when placing this kind of 'spin' on the summary, as there is the potential for the original meaning to become distorted (The Harvard Writing Center, 2000).

Example 2.2 demonstrates an interpretive summary:

Example 2.2

According to McLeod (2018), the purpose of Zimbardo's (1973) prison experiment was to determine whether brutality amongst US prison guards was due to personality traits or environmental factors. To obtain realism, Zimbardo created a prison simulation in the basement of Stanford University; although it could be argued that any simulation of prison can never equate to a true experience, and is therefore, not applicable. 24 participants were randomly assigned to the role of guard or prisoner, which indicates some potential for bias in the assignment of roles. Prisoners were taunted, insulted, and subjected to physical punishment; resulting in a prisoner rebellion against the guards. The experiment was terminated after just six days, due to ethical concerns about the well-being of the participants. The findings of the study suggested support for the effects of the environment on behaviour, but it could still be argued that personality still contributed to some extent.

Take advantage of size

Summarising can be a useful tool for condensing large amounts of information. In an academic reading and writing context: if you come across an entire chapter that covers a topic to perfection, then summarising it will not only allow you to absorb a major chunk of information, but also present that information to your reader, should they wish to peruse it. You can help your reader

out even further by indicating the exact information you are summarising, by including the page numbers, as in Example 2.3.

Example 2.3

In "An Anthropologist on Mars," Sacks notes that although there is little disagreement on the chief characteristics of autism, researchers have differed considerably on its causes. (pp. 22-48).

(Example adapted from University of Toronto, 2019)

Quoting

What is a quote?

A quote is a direct copy of words, exactly as they appear in an original source. When used in your essay, they should always contain a name, a date and a page number (where possible). The focus of an academic essay is on your understanding of your subject so quotes should be used sparingly. Your lecturer will want to see how you understand material; not that you can copy words from a book! When used effectively, quotes can be a useful tool in academic writing. For instance, if the language used in the original source is particularly elegant, powerful or memorable; if the text requires further analysis, or you are conducting a detailed argument (University of Toronto, 2019).

Components of a good quote

- ⚙ Consistent formatting
- ⚙ Edited to enhance the meaning
- ⚙ Short and succinct
- ⚙ Includes a page number

How to quote

You should aim to quote verbatim from original sources; but this isn't always possible. There will be circumstances when you need to edit a quote in order to fit your purposes. These reasons can be stylistic, grammatical or emphatic, as demonstrated in the following examples.

Insert words into quotes

Sometimes it is difficult to insert a quote into the running text of an essay, as the original words don't necessarily match the tense, perspective or voice of your essay. You can amend your quotes, so they match your essay's style, for instance, through the insertion of words or punctuation in order to achieve grammatical agreement. It is important that any insertions are denoted in square brackets. Example 3.1 demonstrates how you can change a parenthetical citation to the main focus of the sentence in the running text:

Example 3.1

"Reading is also a process and it also changes you" (Atwood, 2008, p. 30).

Edited Quote:

Margaret Atwood wanted her readers to realize that "reading is also a process and it also changes [them]" (2008, p. 30).

(Example taken from University of Washington, 2019)

Quote: warts and all

Editing and proof-reading is more of an art than an exact science. Therefore, you might notice a typo or an incorrect spelling in a book, or a journal. This doesn't mean you can't quote that text; but you shouldn't attempt to correct the error either! You should indicate that the error is in the original source by using *sic*, which is the universal indicator that something has been quoted exactly as it appears in the original source. This can also be used for non-standard spellings or any other transcription errors, as demonstrated in Example 3.2.

Example 3.2

"Do to the current market situation, several gas stations ask their customers to pre-pay"
(Madeupimus, 2018).

Edited Quote:

As the *Seattle Weekly* reports, "Do [sic] to the current market situation, several gas stations *ask* [emphasis added] their customers to pre-pay." (Madeupimus, 2018).

(Example adapted from University of Washington, 2019)

Omit information from your quote

You may want to quote two pieces of information from a lengthy paragraph. You can edit your quotes to just contain the necessary information, by replacing the missing words with an ellipsis (. . .). This demonstrates to your reader that you have not included the full quote, but provides them with the opportunity to go and find the full quote if they need to.

Example 3.3

"In a book of that title, Anderson observes that with the possible exception of what he calls 'primordial villages,' human communities exist as imagined entities in which people 'will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each member lives the image of their communion'" (Pratt, 2008, p. 582).

Edited Quote:

As Pratt notes, "Anderson observes that . . . human communities exist as imagined entities in which people 'will never know most of their fellow-members . . .,' yet in the mind of each member lives the image of their communion'" (2008, p. 582).

(Example adapted from University of Washington, 2019)

Add emphasis

You may wish to draw your reader's attention to a particular word or phrase in a quote, in order to develop an argument, or denote a particular perspective. This can be done by adding emphasis; but you must indicate to your reader that this has been added by you as the essay writer and does not feature in the original source.

Example 3.4

"Due to the rise in popularity of 'designer dogs', prospective new dog-owners are spending more money on puppies that have been badly bred, and raised in poor conditions" (Barker, 2013, p. 56).

Emphasis Added:

"Due to the rise in popularity of 'designer dogs', prospective *new* [emphasis added] dog-owners are spending more money on puppies that have been badly bred, and raised in poor conditions" (Barker, 2013, p. 56).

Shared language

Some language is used and shared so often that it can be difficult to paraphrase and might not be necessary to reference. There will be instances in your writing where you wish to use the words of another person, but you aren't sure how you can paraphrase it without losing the meaning or making the words unnecessarily cumbersome. Context is very important here, as what is obvious to a subject-specialist, might not be apparent to other audiences. Here are some examples:

Common knowledge

If something is known to the general public and can be verified by multiple sources in the public domain, then it can be considered as common knowledge. This includes broad historical and societal knowledge. Typically, common knowledge doesn't require a reference, but if you wish to use the exact wording a source has used to describe common knowledge, then this would need to be included as a quote or paraphrased with a reference. For example:

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was written by Lewis Carroll and marks the adventures of a young girl in a strange universe populated by talking animals.

Common knowledge, no reference required

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll was published in 1865; controversially, it used anthropomorphism, fantasy and a young, female protagonist.

More specialist knowledge and the word 'controversially' suggests an opinion – reference needed

Your own thoughts or ideas

In your writing, you will need to present the research in your field to build an argument. However, you need to evaluate the evidence to build your argument, which means putting across your thoughts, perspectives and voice. Many students have thoughts on the evidence they have read and then won't include these evaluations and analyses as 'they don't have a reference for them'. Let's be clear on this: **your own voice requires no reference**. And yes, you are allowed your own voice! A good, critical argument involves analysis and evaluation of evidence. You can think of whether something needs a reference or not by applying the 'They Say, I say' rule:

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was banned in China "on the grounds that animals should not use human language" (Lansley, 2015).

They say...

This indicates that the use of anthropomorphism in this book was contentious and controversial, and ultimately, ground-breaking, and perhaps set the scene for the common theme of talking animals in children's literature.

I say...

Technical terms and phrases of a discipline or genre

Each discipline will have set terminology or phrases used to describe specific phenomena. It is difficult to paraphrase these words or phrases without losing some of the specificity or detracting from the meaning. Therefore, you are permitted to use these words without referencing them in the context of your own writing. Take a look at this example to note when a reference is needed:

Cross-over novels are not a recent invention. They are typically deemed appropriate for both adult and young audiences.

Cross-over novel is subject specific terminology. Here, it is used for your own explanation so no reference required

Cross-over novels are not a recent genre; adolescents on the brink of independence and maturity is a theme that has occurred in titles throughout history (Rosoff, 2007), for example, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Terminology used in the context of an author's explanation – reference required

Common vocabulary

- Collocations are words that appear together frequently to form fixed relationships. This means they are quite restricted in use and are difficult to paraphrase. For example, 'find a replacement', 'close a deal', or 'go to great lengths'. You can use these collocates in your academic writing without referencing.
- Signposts are words that are used to indicate the direction, flow or links in a piece of writing and is a common feature of academic writing. For example, 'however', 'on the other hand', and 'in conclusion'. These can be used in your academic writing without referencing.
- Common terms of reference that have origins in specific disciplines but are used by most people to denote specific societal issues, or terms coined to describe specific phenomena. For example, 'young offenders', 'climate change', and 'no-deal Brexit'. However, you may wish to clarify your use of these terms if you are using them to describe a specific context, or if you are explaining the background to someone who might not be familiar with the word.

References

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