Paraphrasing

This tip sheet outlines why paraphrasing is required, what it is and how to paraphrase.

In academic writing, you are required to refer to other sources of information such as reference books, journal articles, reports and selected websites to support your arguments. Referring to other writers demonstrates that you are developing knowledge in the subject and demonstrates that your points of view are based on evidence from experts on your work. **Paraphrasing** is the most common way of referring to ideas and information from other sources in your writing. **Paraphrasing** means rewriting the ideas or information from expert sources in your own words.

Why do you need to paraphrase?

If you just **copy** information word for word, this does not demonstrate to your marker that you have **understood what it means**. It only shows that you can find and copy relevant information. Your markers need to see that you understand the information and understand how it applies to your assessment topic. Your markers also need to see your own writing so they can give you feedback on it. Written communication is an important employability skill and paraphrasing is an important part of that.

Being able to paraphrase is also an essential skill for university students. It forms an integral part of academic writing and is important in avoiding plagiarism.

What is paraphrasing?

Sometimes students copy information and then only change one or two words in a sentence.

Below is an example of an incomplete paraphrase where only two words (in bold) have been changed and no in-text reference is provided, and another example from the same text that has been correctly paraphrased:

	Incomplete paraphrase	Complete paraphrase
"Australians have been increasingly buying housing for the purpose of securing financial returns." (Murray & Ryan-Collins, 2020)	Australians have been increasingly **purchasing** housing for the purpose of **gaining** financial returns.	More Australians are purchasing properties for financial reasons (Murray & Ryan-Collins, 2020).

These examples show that you need to:

- use your own words and writing style to express all of the ideas, and
- acknowledge the original author with an in-text reference.

How do you write a paraphrase?

The ideas you are paraphrasing must serve a purpose in your writing – they must add to the development of your arguments in some way, rather than just fill a space. You may choose to paraphrase a sentence or two of a source, or an entire paragraph. The essential thing is that the ideas or information are an accurate reflection of the original text.

1. Read your selected text carefully to ensure that you fully understand it. Choose only the key point(s) you wish to make in your paper.

2. Repeat the main idea to yourself or imagine explaining it to someone else. Make a note of the key words, and any technical terms that need to be used.

4. Put the original text out of sight and write your own version, using only the key words and technical terms as prompts. Consider using synonyms for key words (words with a similar meaning) where appropriate.

211

5. Check your paraphrase against the original. The meaning should be the same, but the writing style and structure should be different.

6. Include an in-text reference at the end of your paraphrase.

Paraphrasing examples

	Original text	**Paraphrased version**
Varying the sentence structure	"Creative arts disciplines such as theatre and music often comprise of practical based assignments that require some form of performance" (Smith, 2020, p. 5)	Students often complete practical performance assignments when they study music (Smith, 2020).
Changing the order of ideas	"The most heavily cited factor that participants attributed to not undertaking CPR training, or not having maintained their skills since first voluntarily undertaking training in high school, was cost" (Andrews, Price, Mills & Holmes, 2018, p. 3)	Cost is a main reason for participants not undertaking CPR training (Andrews, Price, Mills & Holmes, 2018).
Breaking a long sentence into two	"In the absence of a medical cure for COVID-19, the global response is a simple public health strategy of isolation for those infected or at risk, reduced social contact to slow the spread of the virus, and simple hygiene such as hand washing to reduce the risk of infection" (Zhou et al.,2020, p. 377).	Governments are using a public health strategy to limit the rate of infection of COVID-19. This includes isolation for infected patients, reduced social contact in the community and basic hygiene measures like hand washing (Zhou et al., 2020).
Combining two sentences into one	"A survey of international students' experiences at the University of Melbourne noted that the students were generally very positive about their experiences in their courses. They highly valued the opportunities for personal growth and academic achievement" (University of Melbourne, 2006, p. 6).	One survey showed that international students had mainly positive study experiences and appreciated the personal growth possibilities (University of Melbourne, 2006).

You can use ECU's Tip Sheet Integrating Ideas for how to integrate ideas in your own work. It includes some example words you can use when referring to academic sources.

Contact
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