

## PARAPHRASING

Use this sheet to help you:

- learn when to paraphrase, summarise and use direct quotations
- develop five paraphrasing techniques

### 5 minute self test

Read the following text and the paraphrased version below it. Answer the questions.

#### Original text

Strategy is commonly thought of as a plan, a consciously intended course of purposeful action. When people talk about 'strategy', they often mean the strategic plan that the business has written down. However, strategy is much more than the strategic plan. At best, this is just the mechanistic summary of the strategic thinking and analysis that the organisation has undertaken (Hubbard, 2000, p. 12).

#### Paraphrase

A widespread perception exists that strategy is a program of meaningful activity. References made to strategy are frequently based on the concept of strategy as a written strategic plan of a company. A strategic plan, though, is merely an overview of the company's strategic thought and study. Strategy is a term which has a considerably broader meaning.

1. What words has the writer of the paraphrased version used for:
  - a. 'consciously intended course of purposeful action'?
  - b. 'business'?
2. What are some other ways in which the text has been paraphrased?
3. What terms have not been changed in the paraphrase? Why?
4. Is anything wrong with the second version? What?

Check your answers on Page 9

## Introduction

Paraphrasing is one of the most important things that you will learn at university. It is a skill that you are likely to use your whole life. Before we look at this skill in detail, it is worth considering paraphrases in relation to summaries and direct quotations.

A *paraphrase* is an extract from another source re-written by another person. A paraphrase contains all or most of the points of the original text and is around the same length. A reference must be provided.

A *summary* is a kind of paraphrase, in the sense that it is also written in one's own words. However, a summary only contains points judged to be important, and is therefore shorter than the source text. A reference must be provided.

A *direct quotation* is quite different from a paraphrase or summary. Direct quotations feature the exact words of a writer given in inverted commas, again, with reference details provided.

## Why paraphrase?

Using direct quotations is easy; anyone can do it! At times, direct quotations are important; there are some occasions when you need to refer to the author's exact words, for example, if you would like to refer to a statement that is particularly famous, striking or succinct.

However, quoting too much is a sign of bad writing. It indicates that you cannot write well, you are lazy, or you do not have strong understanding of the material.

Consider this: if you were a lecturer, would you be more impressed with a text full of points cut and pasted in the form of direct quotations? Or, would you prefer to see ideas and facts incorporated into the text in the forms of paraphrases and summaries which fit the general style of the student's text, and indicate greater understanding and analysis?

## When should you provide citations?

Every time you provide a direct quotation, you should provide an in-text citation and a full reference in the reference list. Paraphrases and summaries are no different. Provide citations every time you make use of facts or ideas found in another text.

The only time in which you would paraphrase and not provide a citation is when what you paraphrase can be considered widely known information that is in the public domain. For example, you would not need to provide a citation if you were to paraphrase this sentence: "Australia is a large country with a relatively low population density". That is widely recognised as common knowledge.

You would, however, need to provide a citation if you were to paraphrase this:  
"Australia's estimated resident population at June 2003 was just under 19.9 million, an increase of 1.2% over the previous year" (About-Australia.com.au, 2008).

The following sentence would need to be paraphrased, cited and commented upon:  
"Holden's brand-new VE Commodore is, without doubt, the best car Australia has ever produced".

An opinion or value judgement is present here. However, "The Holden Commodore is a popular car in Australia." is a sentence that would not need citing. However, it would be wrong to think that there is a fixed rule about what you can NOT cite with confidence. If you have any doubt, provide a citation. You will almost never be accused of citing too much, but you may experience serious consequences if you cite too little.

## Five paraphrasing tips

As you practise the following paraphrasing techniques, remember:

1. Use as many techniques as you can simultaneously. Some of these are insufficient on their own.
2. Vary the techniques (don't use the same ones all the time).
3. Practise the techniques often and regularly. It is not easy to paraphrase.
4. Only begin paraphrasing when you have complete understanding of the source text. Before paraphrasing, read the relevant section of text several times. Use a dictionary if necessary.
5. If you are lucky enough to have the opportunity, tell someone about the point you wish to paraphrase, or even say it aloud yourself. You may find that after talking about the text, writing the paraphrase comes easily.

## Five paraphrasing techniques

### 1. Use synonyms

Using appropriate synonyms is the most important paraphrasing skill. All other techniques are inadequate unless you use synonyms.

Refer to a good thesaurus or dictionary but pay attention to usage. Not all words that are synonyms are used in the same way or have the same meaning. For this reason, be wary about selecting words that you are not familiar with. Don't use synonyms for specialist terms (such as "microeconomics", "Porter's Five Forces", or "aluminum").

Paraphrase the sentences below using appropriate synonyms from the table:

<b>large</b>	major	big	sizable	considerable
<b>increase</b>	rise	expansion	growth	boost
<b>rate</b>	speed	pace	tempo	velocity
<b>growth</b>	escalation	enlargement	expansion	intensification
<b>many</b>	numerous	A multitude of	A lot of	several
<b>predictions</b>	forecasts	guesses	prophecies	estimations
<b>gloomy</b>	dim	ominous	dismal	negative

- A large increase in the rate of growth may occur (Cohen, 2008).
- Many predictions are gloomy (Dylan, 2008).

Now, paraphrase the following sentence using appropriate synonyms.

During the growth stage, sales rise rapidly; profits reach a peak and then start to decline (Pride, Elliot, Rundle-Thiele, Waller, Paladino, and Ferrell, 2006, p. 203).

## 2. Use different parts of speech and different word order

Consider changing words into different part of speech (eg. changing nouns into verbs or adjectives into adverbs). Doing so will involve changing the sentence structure.

**Activity: Paraphrase the sentences below using different parts of speech as presented in the table.**

	Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
increase	increase	increase	increasing / increased	increasingly
tire	tiredness	tire	tiring / tired	tiringly / tiredly
analysis	analysis	analyse	analytical	analytically
management	management	manage	managed / managerial	
strategy	strategy	strategise	strategic	strategically
present	presentation	present	presented	
summary	summary	summarise	summarised	

- The students became increasingly tired when the lecturer analysed the management strategy of Nike.
- When the lecturer presented a framework of the key concepts, the students' interest increased.

**Now, paraphrase the following sentence using different parts of speech.**

As sales increase, management must support the momentum by adjusting the marketing strategy (Pride, Elliot, Rundle-Thiele, Waller, Paladino, and Ferrell, 2006, p. 203).

### 3. Change the sentence type

Sentences can be changed by altering such things as word order, the number of clauses in a sentence, the kind of clauses in a sentence and the kind of linking words used.

It is worth noting here that sentences can be viewed as belonging to one of four categories:

#### The four sentence types

1. Simple sentences (one independent clause)

Product awareness is strong.

2. Compound sentences (more than one independent clause)

Product awareness is strong, but sales are lower than expected.

3. Complex sentences (a combination of an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses)

Although product awareness is strong, sales are lower than expected.

4. Combination sentences (a combination of compound and complex sentences)

While product awareness is strong, sales are lower than expected, and investors are worried.

#### Activity: rewrite the sentences using the accompanying linking words:

The marketing strategy was expensive and innovative; however, sales did not rise.

- but
- although
- in spite of the fact that

Interest rates are likely to rise, and inflation is expected to increase.

- in addition
- not only...but also
- too

Prices rose significantly. Therefore, sales decreased.

- so
- hence
- as a consequence

## Try to keep sentences short

In general, it is better to break long sentences into shorter sentences. Why? Although, the texts you encounter are not always written clearly, clarity should be your goal. Compare:

This model provides a microeconomic theoretic rationale for why researchers have failed to find consistent evidence of the superiority of one teaching technique over another in the production of learning in economics (Becker, 1997, p. 9).

This model provides a microeconomic theoretic rationale. It explains why researchers have failed to find consistent evidence. They have not found the superiority of one teaching technique over another. These techniques have not led to better production of learning in economics (Becker, 1997, p.9) (*Better but still plagiarism*).

## 4. Make abstract ideas concrete

Just as you should try to use sentence structures that increase the readability of your text, you should look for opportunities to make abstract ideas appear concrete. This can be done by choosing simple, clear vocabulary.

Don't view your target reader as an expert, but rather as someone with little specialist knowledge of the topic. Compare:

This model provides a microeconomic theoretic rationale for why researchers have failed to find consistent evidence of the superiority of one teaching technique over another in the production of learning in economics (Becker, 1997, p. 9).

This accounts for why theorists working in the area found the following: a student that is taught with Method A is no better prepared than if he is taught with Method B. The evidence does not show that either A or B is better in terms of learning outcomes (Becker, 1997, p. 9).

(This final paraphrase is better due to the greater use of synonyms and varied sentence structures).

**Activity: paraphrase the following sentence in a way that makes the ideas more concrete**

A matter of considerable importance is the necessity of ensuring thorough comprehension of a source text before commencing the process of paraphrasing.

## 5. Change active voice to passive voice or vice versa

In some cases, you may be able to change sentences written in the active voice into those in the passive voice and vice versa.

Active voice = subject + verb

Passive voice = to be + past participle

She presented the report. = The report was presented by her.

McDonalds is implementing a diversification strategy. = A diversification strategy is being implemented by McDonalds.

An audit needs to be undertaken. = *(Someone)* needs to undertake an audit.

**Activity: change the following sentences from active to passive or vice versa.**

- In 1987, the ASX adopted an automatic trading system known as SEATS.
- SEATS applies the principle of priority trading.
- Orders are ranked in priority of price and then in time within price (by SEATS)
- (Hunt and Terry, 2005, p. 281).

## Use a variety of citation methods

It is, of course, essential that you cite the source of your information. Use a mixture of information prominent, author prominent and weak author methods.

**Information prominent:**

Research indicates that ... (Becker, 1997, p. 9) (usually present tense).

**Weak Author Prominent:**

Research has shown/Some have argued that/ ... (Becker, 1997, p. 9). (usually present perfect tense).

**Author Prominent:**

Becker (1997, p. 9) argues that ... (usually present tense).

Another way to cite information is to use critical review language, eg.

*According to Becker (1997, p. 9).*

*In Becker's view ... (Becker, 1997, p. 9).*

*Becker's point seems to be that ... (Becker, 1997, p. 9).*

There are numerous of alternatives to these phrases listed above, many of which are addressed in the **Study and Research Helpsheet: Language for Citing**).



## A word of warning!

- Plagiarism is easily identified, especially in work by overseas students. Native speakers can easily recognise “perfect” English amongst “imperfect” English.
- Lecturers are often familiar with the key books and articles in a particular area and can identify stolen passages easily (even the page number)!
- Students CAN be asked to leave the university if found guilty of plagiarism and degrees CAN be withheld or withdrawn.

## Accuracy and care

- Check and double-check citation source for accuracy;
- Ensure paraphrased information is true to the original. You must not paraphrase the information incorrectly. You must give the meaning intended by the writer;
- If ellipses (...) are used to shorten source material, ensure that the shortened paraphrase is true to the original and that it does not leave anything important out or change the meaning;
- Ensure that you integrate information from other sources by using critical review language and a mixture of author prominent, weak author, and information prominent citation methods.

## Final Activity

Using a combination of the techniques addressed in this help sheet, paraphrase the following two passages. Suggested answers are given overleaf.

### Example 1

Lead has been known to be a poison for many centuries. In fact, there is evidence that it contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire. There is no doubt that in the second century BC Rome’s wealthy ruling class suffered from a disproportionately high level of stillbirths, sterility and brain damage. And a high lead content has been found in the bones of such ancient Romans. One widely-supported hypothesis is that the cause of both facts was lead poisoning from leaden wine-cups and plates which only the rich could afford (Williams 1982, p. 83).

### Example 2

Demography is the study of the change in size, distribution and character of the human population; and the two most basic factors in demography are the birth-rate and the death-rate. The former expresses the number of children born per thousand people per year. The latter indicates the number of people who die per thousand people per year. If we consider the Earth as a whole, we see that the population growth or decline is caused by the difference between the number of births and deaths over a given period. There are normally more births than deaths, and this is known as a natural increase in population (Williams, 1982, p. 97).

(Examples are from ELBC (Academic Communication Skills) Booklet, Technical and Further Education, Adelaide).

## Answers

5 minute self test

1. a. program of meaningful activity  
b. company
2. Some of the many ways in which the text has been changed are:
  - Commonly thought of as = widespread perception
  - When people talk about strategy = references made to strategy
  - strategic plan that the business has written down = written strategic plan of a company
  - mechanistic summary of the strategic thinking and analysis = overview of the company's strategic thought and study.
3. a. Strategy: this is the precise focus of the whole paragraph and thus should not be changed; b. strategic plan: paraphrasing this specific term is not advised given that the difficulty that may be involved in using an alternative term with the same meaning.
4. An in-text citation has not been provided, thus allowing accusations of plagiarism to be made against the writer.

## Sample Paraphrases

Of course there are many ways to paraphrase. Here are some ways you could have paraphrased the examples:

### Example 1

According to Williams (1982, p. 66) the ancient Roman elite had a much higher incidence of mental retardation and child mortality than the rest of the Roman population. They also had trouble producing children. One explanation for this was the fact that they ate and drank from utensils made of lead. Only the wealthy Romans could afford such utensils. Lead was found in the bones of these people after skeletal remains were discovered in archaeological sites, and later analysed in laboratories. One can even speculate that lead might have been a factor in the decline in the Roman civilisation. Of course, lead has been regarded as a toxic substance for many years but the Roman elite would not have known this (Williams 1982, p. 83).

### Example 2

The human population increases because there are more people being born than those that are dying over a defined period. The number of people being born annually out of a thousand people is known as the birth-rate. Conversely, the number of people who die annually out of a thousand people is known as the death-rate. Both of these measures show the character of the human population at a point in time. The subject which deals with the growth, spread and nature of the human population is the discipline of demography (Williams, 1982, p. 87).

## References

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