

Academic Writing, Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing means changing the words of a text so that the writing is different from the original source, but the meaning remains the same. Paraphrasing is an important academic skill. When it is combined with referencing and citation, it will enable you to avoid plagiarising i.e., copying from source texts.

Paraphrasing and summarising are closely connected and are essential skills in writing an essay. Summarising reduces the information to an appropriate length and the paraphrasing restates the information in your own words.

Read the original text below about Adam Smith.

The exact date of his birth is unknown, but it is thought to be around June 5, 1723. Smith was a Scottish philosopher who became famous for his book *The Wealth of Nations* written in 1776, which has had a profound influence on modern economics and concepts of individual freedom.

Now read the paraphrase of the text. Underline anything the writer has changed.

People think the birth was approximately the 5th of June 1723; however, the precise date is not certain. He was a philosopher who became well known for his 1776 work *The Wealth of Nations* that has had a deep impact on the ideas of individual freedom and modern economics.

Looking at the changes the writer has made above, how do we paraphrase?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

It is important to note that a paraphrase should not change the meaning of the original text. There should be no added opinions or emphasis.

Paraphrasing: Vocabulary

One strategy that helps you to paraphrase a text is changing the vocabulary – using Synonyms.

For example: argues > claims, eighteenth century > 1700s, wages > labour costs

1. Read the original text below.

He usually used this phrase to describe how self-interest guides the most efficient use of resources in a nation’s economy.

Now read the paraphrase below and underline anything the writer has changed.

He often employed this expression to show that self-interest manages the most productive exploitation of resources in a country’s economy.

Building your vocabulary (for example, through extensive reading) and using synonyms is important for your paraphrasing and academic writing.

2. Look up synonyms for the following general academic words and write them below. Try to use these words and their synonyms in your academic writing.

Benefit	
Concept	
Consequence	
Definition	
Drawback	
Factor	
Function	
Indicate	
Occur	
Significant	

3. Rewrite the following sentences changing as much vocabulary as you can.

a. One of the consequences of his work was the concept of a ‘free market’ controlling supply and demand rather than governments.

b. By 1593, the bubonic plague had arrived in London, and many theatres including the Globe were often shut down and forbidden to open for long periods of time.

c. Marie Curie was the first woman to be awarded the Noble Prize, and her achievements included coming up with the term and idea of ‘radioactivity’.

d. During Zaha Hadid’s her early career she faced challenges getting her designs to change from simply paper ideas to actual buildings. Many clients saw her work as extremely extravagant and complicated.

Paraphrasing: Grammar

Another strategy that helps you to paraphrase a text is changing the grammar

- Sentence structure
- Active vs. Passive
- Word forms.

1. Look at the examples below. What has the writer changed in this example?

Original Text: Although little is known about his early career, William Shakespeare may well have been a teacher for a short time.

Paraphrase: *William Shakespeare may well have been a teacher for a short time although little is known about his early career.*

2. Now look at another example. What has the writer changed in this example?

Original Text: The production and supply of resources of a nation are best controlled by demand from consumers.

Paraphrase: *Demand from consumers best controls the production and supply of resources of a nation.*

3. What has the writer changed in this example?

Original Text: Marie Curie's achievements included creating the term and idea of 'radioactivity'.

Paraphrase: *One thing Marie Curie achieved was the creation of the term and idea of 'radioactivity'.*

* You should practice changing all of these areas of grammar in your paraphrasing.

4. Change the grammar: Sentence structure; Active vs. Passive; Word form.

a. A consequence of this was a significant decline in the number of theatres that were open.

b. While Adam Smith was writing ‘The Wealth of Nations’, the effects of the industrial revolution were spreading.

c. ... it was named ‘radioactivity’ by Marie Curie.

d. Because a large part of the trade along this road consisted of silk, it was named ‘the Silk Road’ by Ferdinand von Richthofen, an eminent German geographer, in 1877.

e. His family was of Berber origin, and they had a tradition of service as judges. After receiving an education in Islamic law, he chose to travel.

5. Write a complete paraphrase (changing vocabulary and grammar) for the following sentences.

a. William Shakespeare may well have been a teacher for a short time although little is known about his early career.

b. At the same time, ideas, knowledge and religions were also spread from East to West and from West to East.

c. By the mid 8th century, under the Tang dynasty, the Silk Road had reached its peak. This was largely due to the internal stability and economic development these rulers bought to their country.

d. Civil rights activist Rosa Park’s refusal to surrender her seat to a white passenger on a public bus in Alabama, resulted in a citywide boycott and helped launch nationwide efforts to end segregation of public facilities in the USA.
