

PARAPHRASING

When we describe something we have heard, we often repeat the same idea but use different words. For example, if you hear the TV announcer say, “There is an 80 percent chance of rain tomorrow,” you may tell a friend, “It will probably rain tomorrow.” This last statement is a paraphrase. A *paraphrase* is a restatement of another person’s ideas using our own words.

You can use paraphrasing in writing as well. Repeating the author’s ideas in your own words shows that you truly comprehend the original idea.

The paraphrasing skills that you learn now as you explore your theme will also be useful later when you integrate ideas from the articles into your paper. Chapter 4 discusses how to use information from articles appropriately in academic writing.



Three Criteria for a Good Paraphrase

1. **A good paraphrase has the same meaning as the original.**
 - All main ideas included
 - No new ideas added
2. **A good paraphrase is different enough from the original to be considered your own writing.**
 - Uses no more than four or five words in a row from the original source
 - Changes grammar and vocabulary as much as possible
3. **A good paraphrase refers directly to (or cites) the original source.**
 - Include the name of the author and/or the name of the source (You will study citing and documenting sources in Chapter 5.)

PARAPHRASE EXAMPLES

Original: Genuine multitasking, too, has been exposed as a myth, not just by laboratory studies but by the familiar sight of an S.U.V. undulating between lanes as the driver cuts deals on his cellphone.

—Pinker, Steven, “Mind Over Mass Media,” June 10, 2010

Paraphrase 1: Pinker (2010) writes that people can’t really do more than one thing at a time; we can see this from scientific research projects and also from just watching a car moving unpredictably down the highway while the driver is talking on a cell phone.

Paraphrase 2: Pinker (2010) says that both lab research and actual experience show that people are incapable of doing several things at once. As an example of this act, he mentions the frequent sight of a person driving dangerously while using a cell phone.

NOW YOU TRY

Here is an original sentence and two paraphrases of it. One of the paraphrases is well done, but the other does not meet all the criteria for a good paraphrase. Decide which of the two paraphrases is weak. Identify which of the criteria is missing.

Original: A global village was upon us that more and more resembled an American buffet table – even if chilis, chutney and kimchee were added to the mix.
—Rifkin, Ira, *Spiritual Perspectives on Globalization*, 2003

Paraphrase 1: We came to a big table with food from many different countries, but it was really a lot like an American meal.

Does the paraphrase meet all three criteria? Yes No (circle one)

If no, what is the problem? _____

Paraphrase 2: In this article, Rifkin (2003) says that the whole world seemed increasingly like the United States, although it also included contributions from many other cultures.

Does the paraphrase meet all three criteria? Yes No (circle one)

If no, what is the problem? _____



Two Techniques for Paraphrasing

Below are two ways to approach paraphrasing:

- tell-a-friend method
- chunking method

TELL-A-FRIEND METHOD

One effective way to paraphrase is to focus on the meaning of the passage and find a completely new way to explain it. The tell-a-friend method works well in this situation.

1. Read the original and concentrate on what it means.
2. Cover the original so that you cannot see it.
3. Imagine you are talking to a good friend. How would you explain this idea to your friend? Write down your explanation.
4. Go back and read the original again to see if it means the same as your paraphrase.

EXAMPLE

- Original:** Leadership by birth order apparently holds for both genders. Studies have found that female executives are much more likely to be firstborns than later-borns.
—Koselka, Rita and Shook, Carrie, "Born to Rebel? Or Born to Conserve?" 1997
- Paraphrase:** Not only firstborn men, but also firstborn women are more likely to be executives than people who are later born (Koselka & Shook, 1997).

- Notice that while the key ideas from the original are included in the paraphrase, the structure of the paraphrase is very different.

NOW YOU TRY

Using the proverbs below, practice the tell-a-friend method of paraphrasing.

- Proverb:** Don't cry over spilled milk.
- Paraphrase:** When something bad happens that you can't control, it doesn't help to get upset.

1. With a partner, choose one of the proverbs below and use the tell-a-friend method to write a paraphrase of it.
 - All work and no play make Jack a dull boy.
 - All that glitters is not gold.
 - The squeaky wheel gets the oil.

Write your paraphrase here. _____

2. Find a new partner and tell that person your paraphrase. Have your partner guess which proverb you're paraphrasing.

CHUNKING METHOD

Another way to paraphrase is to divide the original into phrases, or "chunks," and concentrate on explaining the meaning of each chunk. A chunk is a group of words that expresses a key idea in the passage you are working with. Chunks are often noun, adjective, or adverb clauses. This method can be especially helpful when you are working with longer passages. Here's how *chunking* works.

1. Read the original passage several times to develop a basic understanding of the ideas.
2. Divide the passage into chunks by underlining the main ideas. As you divide the passage, focus on phrases rather than on individual words.

3. Explain each chunk using your own words.
4. Combine these explanations into one or more sentences to create a paraphrase. As you combine these chunks, you will need to think about how the ideas are related to each other. It is okay to rearrange these chunks into a new order for your paraphrase.

In the two examples below, the original sentences are divided into chunks. Each chunk is then explained in a new way. Finally, the chunks are combined to form a paraphrase.

EXAMPLE 1

Original:	<u>It's estimated that hunger and malnutrition could be eliminated globally</u> Chunk #1 <u>for less than is spent on pet food in Europe and the US; universal literacy</u> Chunk #2 <u>could be achieved for one-third of what is spent annually on perfumes.</u> Chunk #3
	Chunk #4 <p style="text-align: right;">—Knickerbocker, Brad, "If Poor Get Richer, Does World See Progress?" <i>The Christian Science Monitor</i>, Jan. 22, 2004</p>
Rewordings of chunks:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Problems of famine could be solved worldwide 2. For less money than it costs people to feed their pets in the US and Europe 3. Everyone could learn to read and write 4. For about 33 percent of the amount that people spend on perfume every year
Paraphrase:	<u>Knickerbocker (2004) notes that problems of famine could be solved worldwide</u> Chunk #1 <u>for less money than it costs people to feed their pets in the US and Europe,</u> Chunk #2 <u>and everyone could learn to read and write for about 33% of the amount</u> Chunk #3 <u>that people spend on perfume every year.</u> Chunk #4

Example 2 shows a paraphrase in which the chunks have been arranged in an order that is different from the original.

EXAMPLE 2

Original:	<u>There is an element of sacrifice and obligation: women are expected to make</u> Chunk #1 <u>many things secondary once the husband comes along, to devote their</u> Chunk #2 <u>energies to him and his house and the building of another family Unit.</u> Chunk #3
	<p style="text-align: right;">—Wark, Penny, "What Does Life Tell Us About Love?" 2003</p>

After they get married, women must give up time and energy for themselves
Chunk #2 **Chunk #1**
 because they are expected to focus on taking care of their husband, home,
Chunk #3
 and children (Wark, 2003).

A third paraphrasing method that involves changes in grammar, word order, and vocabulary is available on the *Sourcework* website at <http://esl.hmco.com/students>. Look for **Grammar Toolbox Method**.

ACTIVITY 1 Identifying Problems in Paraphrases

Explanation _____

Paraphrase 2: Countries that are rich and value individualism are more likely to believe in romantic love (Levine, 1993).

OK Not OK

Explanation _____

3. *Original:* Globalization so often seems to threaten the identity of the individual,
Chunk #1 Chunk #2
by subjecting us to someone else's rules.
Chunk #3

—Ma, Yo-Yo, "Paths of Globalization: From the Berbers to Bach,"
New Perspectives Quarterly, Spring 2008

Paraphrase 1: Ma (2008) comments that globalization frequently appears to challenge a person's sense of who he or she is because it makes us follow decisions made by others whom we don't know.

OK Not OK

Explanation _____

Paraphrase 2: Ma (2008) says that globalization usually terrorizes people by enslaving them in rules that someone else has written.

OK Not OK

Explanation _____

ACTIVITY 2 Chunking Practice

Select a longer passage (no more than three full sentences) from one of the articles you are reading from Part Two. Use the chunking method to paraphrase this passage. You may work alone, with a partner, or in a group. Share your paraphrasing process with a small group of the class.

1. Read the original passage.
2. Show how you divided the passage into chunks. Discuss why you divided the passage as you did.
3. Explain your paraphrase of each chunk.

4. Show your final and complete paraphrase. Discuss the choices you made as you arranged the ideas in your final paraphrase.
5. Ask for feedback on your paraphrase. Does the paraphrase have the same meaning as the original? Is it written in your own words? Is it grammatically correct?

ACTIVITY 3 Paraphrasing Proverbs

1. Working in a small group, think of a proverb familiar to you.
2. Take a few minutes for each group member to write a paraphrase of the proverb.
3. Read each person's paraphrase aloud and discuss each of the paraphrases using the following criteria:
 - It is close in meaning to the proverb.
 - No new ideas are added.
 - Important ideas are not deleted.

ACTIVITY 4 Finding the Paraphrase

1. With a small group, select two or three sentences from an article in Part Two that everyone in the class has already read.
2. Using the tell-a-friend method, the chunking method, or a combination of the two, rewrite the passages you have selected.
3. Evaluate your paraphrase, according to the criteria for a good paraphrase on page 6.
4. Trade your paraphrases with another group.
5. Read the other group's paraphrases and see if you can identify the original passages in the article.

ACTIVITY 5 Guessing the Paraphrase

1. Work in groups of three. Ask one member of each group to leave the room.
2. The remaining group members read a sentence or short excerpt from an article in Part Two that you have already read.
3. Cover the passage and discuss the meaning of what you have read.
4. Write a paraphrase of the passage.
5. Ask the group member who left the room to return. That person reads your paraphrase and identifies the original passage in the article.
6. Write your group's paraphrase on the board. Then, discuss each group's paraphrase as a class, using the criteria for a good paraphrase on page 6.