

MUNI
ECON

Paraphrasing

Academic writing
Seminar 2

The text below has some style problems

Many students use poor academic style in their writing, like using I, we and you. A simple way to improve this is to study good examples of academic style and to follow them. Their writing score will go up as a result. And it will be useful at university. Style is always a problem for non-English students, who make lots of mistakes when they start to write academic English, by using, for example, phrasal verbs instead of more formal verbs. This is something that such students need to learn to overcome if they wish to reach a higher grade. What other ways are there for students to improve their style? One way is to ask the teacher for advice. A considerable number of students don't listen to their teachers, and therefore do not improve. This is a terrible situation. It is important for students to remember that they are now adults, not kids. If they do not follow teachers' advice, their writing style will not improve.

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Many students use poor academic style in their writing, **for example** using I, we and you. A simple way to improve this is to study good examples of academic style and to follow them. Their writing score will **increase** as a result. **In addition** it will be useful at university. Style is **often** a problem for non-English students, who make **a considerable number of** mistakes when they start to write academic English, by using, for example, phrasal verbs instead of more formal verbs. This is **a problem** that such students need to learn to overcome if they wish to reach a higher grade. **There are other ways in which students can improve their style.** One way is to ask the teacher for advice. A considerable number of students **do not** listen to their teachers, and therefore do not improve. ~~**This is a terrible situation.**~~ It is important for students to remember that they are now adults, not **children**. If they do not follow teachers' advice, their writing style **is unlikely to** improve.

■ In the following sentences, underline examples of bad style and rewrite them in a more suitable way.

- (a) What was the biggest thing that made Lehman Brothers collapse?
- (b) Unfortunately, I think there's a good chance of inflation increasing.
- (c) Lots of people think that the economy is getting worse.
- (d) A few years ago the price of property in Japan went down a lot.
- (e) You can't always trust the numbers in that report.
- (f) Sadly, the German inflation led to poverty, social unrest and so on.
- (g) They sacked the boss for cooking the books.
- (h) These days lots of people don't have jobs.

■ In the following sentences, underline examples of bad style and rewrite them in a more suitable way.

(a) What was the biggest thing that made Lehman Brothers collapse?

The main factor in the collapse of Lehman Brothers was . . .

(b) Unfortunately, I think there's a good chance of inflation increasing.

There appears to be a significant risk of inflation increasing.

(c) Lots of people think that the economy is getting worse.

It is commonly believed that the economy is deteriorating.

(d) A few years ago the price of property in Japan went down a lot.

After 1989, the price of Japanese property fell sharply.

(e) You can't always trust the numbers in that report.

The numbers in that report are unreliable.

(f) Sadly, the German inflation led to poverty, social unrest and so on.

The German inflation led to poverty and social unrest.

(g) They sacked the boss for cooking the books.

The manager was dismissed for embezzlement.

(h) These days lots of people don't have jobs.

Currently there is high unemployment.

In the following text, remove all repetition and redundancy, rewriting where necessary.

FAST FOOD

Currently these days, fast food is growing in popularity. Fast food is a kind of food that people can buy or cook quickly. This essay examines the advantages of fast food and the drawbacks of fast food. First above all, fast food is usually tasty. Most of the people who work in offices are very busy, so that they do not have time to go to their homes for lunch. But the people who work in offices can eat tasty and delicious food in McDonalds' restaurants, which are franchised in hundreds of countries. In addition, the second benefit of fast food is its cheapness. As it is produced in large quantities, this high volume means that the companies can keep costs down. As a result fast food is usually less expensive than a meal in a conventional restaurant.

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Model answer:

Currently, fast food is growing in popularity. Fast food is food that people can buy or cook quickly. This essay examines the advantages and drawbacks of fast food. First, it is usually tasty. Most people who work in offices are very busy, so they do not have time to go home for lunch. But they can eat tasty food in restaurants such as McDonald's. The second benefit of fast food is cheapness. As it is produced in large quantities, this means that companies can keep costs down. As a result it is usually less expensive than a meal in a conventional restaurant.

Three ways to use someone's else work in your own

1. quotation,
2. paraphrase
3. summary.

Paraphrase is the most common of the three.

Materials: <https://www.eapfoundation.com/writing/paraphrase/>

- Using **quotation** is easier, especially for beginning writers, but you should use quotation sparingly (less than 5% of text).
- **Paraphrasing** is better than quoting, because a quote in your writing only shows your ability to copy from a text but does not demonstrate any understanding of your reading unless you then include an interpretation of the quote.
- **Paraphrasing** is the process of reading a section of text and then re-writing it using your own words. It is necessary in university study as it shows that you have understood the information.

- Paraphrasing is different from **summarizing**. When paraphrasing you need to write more precisely and convey the meaning in as few words as possible.
- Paraphrasing is favoured over summary because it allows you to keep the full meaning of the original text, rather than just stating the main points.
- Effective paraphrasing is essential in order to avoid **plagiarism**. Avoiding plagiarism, however, is not the main aim of paraphrasing.

□ Paraphrasing is a way of showing your **understanding** of the information you have read but it is a descriptive way of writing. It is a good starting point for developing your academic writing style and learning to understand the need to reference in your first year at university but as you move into later years you will need to develop a more critical approach.

How to paraphrase

- Keep the paraphrase as simple as possible.
- Express the points concisely.
- Use your own words and do not be tempted to copy from the original text unless there is to include technical language.

Three vocabulary techniques:

1. changing words;
2. changing word forms;
3. changing word order.

Read the text below and then evaluate the three paraphrases giving reasons

Task 1

THE CAUSES OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Allen (2009) argues that the best explanation for the British location of the industrial revolution is found by studying demand factors. By the early eighteenth century high wages and cheap energy were both features of the British economy. Consequently, the mechanisation of industry through such inventions as the steam engine and mechanical spinning was profitable because employers were able to economise on labour by spending on coal. At that time, no other country had this particular combination of expensive labour and abundant fuel.

- (a) A focus on demand may help to explain the UK origin of the Industrial Revolution. At that time, workers' pay was high, but energy from coal was inexpensive. This encouraged the development of mechanical inventions based on steam power, which enabled bosses to save money by mechanising production (Allen, 2009).
- (b) The reason why Britain was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution can be understood by analysing demand in the early 1700s, according to Allen (2009). He maintains that, uniquely, Britain had the critical combination of cheap energy from coal and high labour costs. This encouraged the adoption of steam power to mechanise production, thus saving on wages and increasing profitability.
- (c) Allen (2009) claims that the clearest explanation for the UK location of the Industrial Revolution is seen by examining demand factors. By the eighteenth century, cheap energy and high wages were both aspects of the British economy. As a result, the mechanisation of industry through inventions such as the steam engine and mechanical spinning was profitable because employers were able to save money on labour by spending on coal. At that time, Britain was the only country with significant deposits of coal.

Look for

- Changing vocabulary by using synonyms
- Changing word class:
- Changing word order:

(a) Quite good, but lack of precision (at that time) and unsuitable register (bosses)

(b) The best paraphrase, with all main points included and a significantly different structure

(c) A poor paraphrase, with only a few words changed and extra and inaccurate information added (Britain was the only country . . .)

What not to do when paraphrasing:

- ❑ Use the same sentence structure as the original source: for example, only changing a few words.
- ❑ Only slightly adapt the original source and then pass this off as your own summary or paraphrase.
- ❑ Copy useful pieces of the original text and pad it out using your own words.
- ❑ You must not use bits of the original sentence(s) without referencing these appropriately otherwise you risk being accused of plagiarism.
- ❑ Change each word to a similar one, a synonym, as you go along a sentence, so technically it is all changed. This it does not demonstrate your understanding of the source read.

Example 1

Original text from Pears and Shields (2013, p.113)

“Paraphrase: A restating of someone else's thoughts or ideas in your own words.”

Paraphrase

Paraphrasing is a restatement of another person's ideas or thoughts using your own words.

In this example, the following changes have been made:

- ▶ Paraphrase ⇒ Paraphrasing (*change word form*)
- ▶ restating ⇒ restatement (*change word form*)
- ▶ someone else's ⇒ another person's (*change words*)
- ▶ thoughts or ideas ⇒ ideas or thoughts (*change word order*)
- ▶ in ⇒ using (*change word*)

Example 2

Original text from Bailey (2000, p.21)

“Paraphrasing involves changing a text so that it is quite dissimilar to the source yet retains all the meaning.”

Paraphrase

Paraphrase requires a text to be altered in a way which makes it different from the original while keeping the same meaning.

In this example, the following changes have been made:

- ▶ Paraphrasing ⇒ Paraphrase (*change word form*)
- ▶ involves ⇒ requires (*change word*)
- ▶ changing a text ⇒ a text to be altered (*change word order*)
- ▶ changing ⇒ altered (*change word*)
- ▶ so that it is ⇒ in a way which makes it (*change words*)
- ▶ dissimilar to ⇒ different from (*change words*)
- ▶ the source ⇒ the original (*change words*)
- ▶ yet retains all the meaning ⇒ while keeping the same meaning (*change words*)

(a) Find synonyms for the words underlined. Rewrite the sentences using these.

It is often argued that governments can create employment and reduce carbon emissions by investing in renewable energy projects. These so-called 'green jobs' have the appeal of also helping to combat global warming while reducing a country's dependence on imported fuels.

Model answer:

(a) It is frequently claimed that governments can create jobs and cut carbon emissions by investing in renewable energy schemes. These so-called 'green jobs' have the attraction of helping to fight global warming while lowering a nation's dependence on imported fuels.

(b) Change the word class of the underlined words. Rewrite the sentences using the changes.

However, critics of these schemes claim that the results are not as beneficial as they seem. Firstly, if the money was spent on other projects such as road building, jobs would also be created.

(b) But there are claims by critics of these schemes that the benefits are less than they seem. Firstly, spending the money on other projects such as road-building would also allow the creation of jobs.

(c) Change the word order of these sentences, rewriting the paragraph so the meaning stays the same.

Secondly, higher government borrowing to pay for the investment has to be financed by the taxpayer, and it may eventually affect the cost of borrowing for all businesses. In addition, subsidising relatively inefficient energy sources such as solar and wind power will raise the price of electricity for consumers.

(c) Secondly, the taxpayer has to finance higher government borrowing to pay for the investment, and all business borrowing may eventually be affected. In addition, the price of electricity for consumers may be raised by subsidising solar and wind power, which are relatively inefficient sources of energy.

(d) Combine all three techniques to paraphrase the next paragraph.

A study in Spain looked at the cost of subsidising renewable energy over 25 years. The estimated expenditure of €29 billion will provide 50,000 jobs, but they will have cost €570,000 each to create. If, however, the government had allowed private industry to spend the same amount, it would have created 113,000 posts; more than twice as many. So it can be argued that the Spanish scheme will have actually destroyed over 50,000 jobs.

(d) A Spanish study examined potential subsidies given over 25 years to renewable energy. It found that each of the 50,000 jobs created cost €570,000, with an estimated total spending of €29 billion. But had the state permitted the same sum to be spent by private businesses they would have produced over twice as many jobs: 113,000. According to these calculations the subsidies in Spain have effectively eliminated more than 50,000 posts.