

CHAPTER
1.6

Paraphrasing



Paraphrasing means changing the wording of a text so that it is significantly different from the original source, without changing the meaning. Effective paraphrasing is a key academic skill needed to avoid the risk of plagiarism: it demonstrates your understanding of a source. This unit focuses on techniques for paraphrasing as part of the note-making and summarising process.

1 The elements of effective paraphrasing

Paraphrasing and summarising are normally used together in essay writing, but while summarising aims to **reduce** information to a suitable length, paraphrasing attempts to **restate** the relevant information. For example, the following sentence:

There has been much debate about the reasons for the industrial revolution happening in eighteenth-century Britain, rather than in France or Germany.

could be paraphrased:

Why the industrial revolution occurred in Britain in the eighteenth century, instead of on the continent, has been the subject of considerable discussion.



Note that an effective paraphrase usually:

- has a different structure to the original
- has mainly different vocabulary
- retains the same meaning
- keeps some phrases from the original that are in common use e.g. 'industrial revolution' or 'eighteenth century'

2 Practice A

- Read the text below and then evaluate the three paraphrases (1=best), giving reasons.

2.1 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 employees by spending on coal. At that time, Britain was the only country with significant deposits of coal.

a	
b	
c	

3 Techniques for paraphrasing

- (a) Changing vocabulary by using synonyms:

argues > claims/ eighteenth century > 1700s/ wages > labour costs/ economise > saving

NB. Do not attempt to paraphrase every word, since some have no true synonym, e.g. demand, economy, energy

- (b) Changing word class:

explanation (n.) > explain (v.) / mechanical (adj.) > mechanise (v.) / profitable (adj.) > profitability (n.)

- (c) Changing word order:

... the best explanation for the British location of the industrial revolution is found by studying demand factors.

> A focus on demand may help explain the UK origin of the industrial revolution.



▶ See Units 3.2 Academic vocabulary and 3.11 Synonyms

4 Practice B

- Read the following text and then practise the techniques illustrated above.

4.1 FOUR WHEELS GOOD

The growth of the car industry parallels the development of modern capitalism. It began in France and Germany, but took off in the United States. There Henry Ford adapted the moving production line from the Chicago meat industry to motor manufacturing, thus inventing mass production. In the 1920s Alfred Sloan's management theories helped General Motors to become the world's dominant car company. After the second world war the car makers focused on the styling of their products to encourage more frequent model changes. From the 1970s there was criticism of the industry due to the inefficiency of most vehicles, which used petrol wastefully. At the same time, trades unions became increasingly militant in defence of their members' jobs. Today the industry owns some of the most famous brands in the world. However, many car makers are currently threatened by increased competition and saturated markets.

- (a) Find synonyms for the words underlined.
 - (i) The growth of the car industry parallels the development of modern capitalism.
Example: The rise of the automobile industry matches the progress of contemporary capitalism.
 - (ii) It began in France and Germany, but took off in the United States.
 - (iii) There Henry Ford adapted the moving production line from the Chicago meat industry to motor manufacturing, thus inventing mass production.

■ (b) Change the word class of the underlined words, and then re-write the sentences.

- (i) In the 1920s Alfred Sloan's management theories helped General Motors to become the world's dominant car company.

Example: In the 1920s, with help from the managerial theories of Alfred Sloan, General Motors dominated the world's car companies.

- (ii) After the second world war the car makers focused on the styling of their products, to encourage more frequent model changes.
- (iii) From the 1970s there was criticism of the industry due to the inefficiency of most vehicles, which used petrol wastefully.

■ (c) Change the word order of the following sentences (other changes may be needed).

- (i) At the same time, trades unions became increasingly militant in defence of their members' jobs.

Example: At the same time increasingly militant trades unions defended their members' jobs.

- (ii) Today the industry owns some of the most famous brands in the world.
- (iii) However, many car makers are currently threatened by increased competition and saturated markets.

■ (d) Combine all these techniques to paraphrase the paragraph as fully as possible.