How to paraphrase

When you introduce a citation, you need to put what you’ve read into your own words – this is known as paraphrasing. Paraphrasing is a key academic skill, as it demonstrates to your lecturer that you understand the material, allows you to summarise and improves the flow of your assignment. If you don’t paraphrase well, you could be accused of plagiarism, or trying to steal someone’s work (Godfrey, 2016)

Method 1

1. **Understand**: check that you know the meaning of all the terms in the sentence or paragraph that you want to use. Use a dictionary to look them up.
2. **Hide**: put the book or article away so that you’re not looking at it.
3. **Write** a summary from your own understanding and memory
4. **Check** against the original to make sure your version uses different words

**Advantages**
The advantages of this method are that:
- ✓ your paraphrase will be in your own style, in keeping with the rest of your writing
- ✓ you’ll be using terms that you understand
- ✓ as you’ll be summarising, it will fit in with your argument.
- ✓ it can be quite quick to produce paraphrases in this way

Method 2

If you’re struggling with Method 1, you can use a more systematic approach. In this method, you try to change the original by applying a combination of different techniques.
Please note that no single technique is likely to be enough on its own as you won’t make sufficient changes to the original (Paterson and Wedge, 2013).
1. Synonyms or similar terms
Are there alternative terms you can use for any of the words? Some common synonyms in academic writing are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Alternatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>consider</td>
<td>discuss, study, explore,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highlight</td>
<td>focus on, emphasise, stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in addition</td>
<td>moreover, furthermore, additionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strength</td>
<td>advantage, positive aspect, benefit, value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difficulty</td>
<td>drawback, limitation, shortcoming, disadvantage, weakness, criticism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If you use Word, you can right click then select ‘Synonyms’ to see alternative terms. Make sure that you understand the word that you’re using, and that it’s a term that’s familiar to you. If you’ve never heard of it before, don’t use it, as you’re likely to end up writing gibberish.

- For alternative phrases, see the Academic Phrasebank website (University of Manchester, 2018).

- You don’t need to change specific technical terms from your subject area such as nurse, hospital, or scientific terms.

2. Swapping the order
You can often change the structure of a sentence, or the order of two related sentences.

One way of doing this is swapping two halves of a sentence by replacing cause with effect or vice versa. For example:

The heavy rainfall caused a flood. (Cause)
The flood was caused by heavy rainfall. (Effect)
Other examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Led to</td>
<td>Resulted from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the basis/foundation</td>
<td>Followed on from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the source of</td>
<td>Occurred due to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You could also change the order by swapping the reason for something with its result or consequences. ‘Because’ is often used for the reason, while ‘so’ shows the consequences. For example:

It is important to encourage play in schools because children learn from it (Reason)
Children learn from play so it is important to encourage it in schools. (Result/Consequences)

Another area that is easy to swap around is a list. You can change the order of items, combine some, or leave some out.

3. **Opposites**

You could try to change an expression by using its opposite with a negative. For example, small/large, cheap/expensive, long/short

The budget deficit was **greater** than expected.
The budget deficit was **not as small** as was expected.

4. **Replacing with a related word**

Many frequently used words appear in slightly different forms, depending on their role in a sentence. For example:

One **interpretation** of the results is that the experiment was unsuccessful.
The results could be **interpreted** as meaning that the experiment was unsuccessful.

By changing the term, it forces you to make other changes to the sentence. In grammatical terms, the first example is a noun, and the second a verb. But you don’t need to identify the grammatical terms in order to use this technique. You just need to be aware of some of the more common related words.
For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Related words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Analyse, analysing, analytical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Respond, respondent, responsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>Signify, significant, significantly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Advantages**
The advantages of Method 2 are that:
- ✓ it makes you think about how the sentence is constructed
- ✓ it gives you options if you can’t think of how to paraphrase

**References**
