HOW TO PARAPHRASE

A paraphrase rephrases a specific sentence or set of sentences in your own words. It is a good way to show your marker that you have understood your reading.

1. Read the whole paragraph to get the full context.

   An alternative way of monitoring how much you work is to measure what you achieve rather than how long it takes you to do. Depending on the task you could measure the amount of words you write or the number of questions that you answer for example. Set yourself a target – perhaps of writing 500 words per session – and make this a minimum target, regardless of how long it takes you to do. This method has that inbuilt incentive for you to finish the work as soon as possible. If you finish the work quickly then the rest of the day/evening or weekend is your own to do what you like with it. You will need to build in time to review the quality of the work if you decide to organize your study periods entirely by timescales. Finally, you might want to use reverse psychology to motivate yourself to get the work done. Instead of saying that working for 3 hours or writing 500 words is your minimum, you might want to make it your maximum. So by saying that you will not allow yourself to write more than 500 words or that you will not work for more than 3 hours you make yourself regard the work as a treat rather than a chore.

2. Without looking at the original, write your understanding of what you’ve read. Then check to make sure you’ve got it right.

Hoult argues that setting targets for achievement can be an effective way of managing study time, and may encourage task completion.

3. Don’t forget to make a note of the bibliographic details for your references.


Tips for better paraphrasing

Students often find paraphrasing difficult because they are worried about plagiarism, but can’t see how to phrase ideas better than the original author did. These tips can help:

- Never try to read and paraphrase a single sentence at a time – always read the whole paragraph first.

- If there’s a key word or short phrase that you can’t paraphrase, integrate it into your sentence as a mini-quote.

- Keep the purpose of your writing in mind. The original author will have been writing for a different purpose – so the words may be perfect for that but not for what you want to say.