

Paraphrasing

Tips for Paraphrasing

This is a very useful academic skill, which is necessary whenever you are writing a researched essay or report.

Paraphrasing is a two-stage process: it involves changing the sentence structure of the original and changing most of the words.

Choose a different element of the original sentence to be the starting word or words of your new sentence.

When you are changing the words, a thesaurus and a good dictionary (the type which provides examples of how words are used) can both be very helpful. Do not be afraid to change to a simpler word. Do not guess. There is no need to change the technical words which are specific to your subject, but the other words should be different from the original.

If you cannot think of a completely different word, at the very least use it in a different grammatical form, for example:

He resorted to negotiation.
negotiation
He eventually negotiated.

There may be specialist dictionaries for your subject so look in the Reference section of the library. Reading widely in your subject increases your vocabulary and helps you to think of appropriate alternative words.

The following examples show the two-stage process: first, the grammar of the sentence is changed and then the words are altered.

Original sentence:

A tertiary student in the present century is expected to have advanced information technology skills and to be thoroughly acquainted with different citation styles.

First stage: change the structure

This sentence begins with the skills:

Advanced information technology skills, and a thorough acquaintance with different citation styles are all expected from tertiary students in the present century.

This version changes from a passive to an active construction, by naming the people who expect the skills:

University teachers in the present century expect students to have advanced information technology skills and to be thoroughly acquainted with different citation styles.