**Paraphrasing, Summarizing**

**Paraphrasing**

What is paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing is the expression of meaning or ideas using different words, especially in order to achieve greater clarity. In academic writing, paraphrasing is a technique that should be employed regularly, as we use the ideas of others, but need to present them in a way that emphasizes our argument or purpose, whilst not detracting from the content. If you paraphrase in your academic work, you still need to include a reference, as although the words have changed, the underlying idea or concept is still the intellectual property of the original author. The majority of evidence from the literature used in your essays should be paraphrased: you should reserve direct quotes for those key points that you need to use for emphasis or other specific purposes.

Components of a good paraphrase

* Retains and honors the original meaning
* Demonstrates your subject synthesis
* Always acknowledges the original source

**How to paraphrase**

Here are some techniques you can use to craft a good paraphrase. Remember, a good paraphrase honors the original meaning of the source, so you may find that you need to use a combination of all three techniques to make your paraphrase more effective, and a lot different to the original quote. 2

**Use synonyms**

Synonyms are words that have similar meanings, so can be used interchangeably. It is worth consulting a Thesaurus for this technique, to look at a variety of alternative words, and to ensure that the replacements are suitable to the style and tone of the essay.

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| **Example 1.1**  Soller (2010, p. 12) states that ‘Companies that show a genuine interest in charitable activities can earn the respect of the buying public.’  **Paraphrased:**  Businesses that demonstrate a real interest in not-for-profit activities can gain the respect of consumers (Soller, 2010).  (Example taken from Harrison, Jakeman & Paterson, 2016) |

**Change the form of words**

In the English language, certain words can be expressed as nouns, adjectives, verbs or adverbs; depending on their morphology. You can change the form of a word to enable an effective paraphrase.

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| **Example 1.2** Michaels (2009, p. 100) states that: ‘Some charities owe their success to the selective use of consultants.’  **Paraphrased:**  Some charities are more successful as consultants are employed selectively (Michaels, 2009).  (Example taken from Harrison, Jakeman & Paterson, 2016) |

**Change the grammatical structure of the original**

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| **Example 1.3**  Polson (2009, p.34) states: ‘Persuading the public to sign up to monthly donations is a more cost-effective policy than collecting single contributions.’  **Paraphrased:**  Collecting single contributions is not as effective as persuading the public to sign up to monthly donations (Polson, 2009).  (Example taken from Harrison, Jakeman & Paterson, 2016) |

This includes changing positive constructions into negative constructions (as below), swapping the order of information, changing active sentences into passive sentences or varying clause structure. It is worth noting that the tense might change in your paraphrase, but you should always make sure that the tense in use is appropriate for your purposes. 3

**Combine all three**

An effective paraphrase will combine all three techniques, so that the words and structure of the original text is changed, but the essence and the meaning of the original text is still intelligible. You will not need to make substitutions for subject-specific terminology when you paraphrase, as you are expected to demonstrate your use of these terms and apply them in the essay writing context. Here is an example of a good paraphrase, that makes use of all the aforementioned techniques. You will note that certain words have not been substituted to retain subject-specific vocabulary or collective terminology (underlined):

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| **Example 1.4**  “The police already use social media as a direct channel for engagement with the public. It is currently being used as a constant and reassuring contact, sharing accurate information and dispelling rumours. It can also allow citizens and the police to work together to make society safer” (DEMOS, 2013, p.6).  **Paraphrased**  The police force utilises social media as a way of communicating directly with citizens. At present, this tool is used for many purposes, such as the reinforcement of community support, the distribution of information essential to the public, and the dismissal of potential disinformation. It also encourages a partnership between the police and the public, to achieve community safety (DEMOS, 2013, p. 6). 4 |

**Summarizing**

What is a summary?

A summary is a technique used in academic writing that takes a large amount of information, and reduces it to a small number of phrases, to paint a picture of the original text for the reader. Summaries are not used to detail or expand; they are used to succinctly capture important information in a manageable way; so that the reader doesn’t have to sift through irrelevant information. Summarising is like paraphrasing, so it still requires a reference when conducted in your academic work. It is an excellent technique to apply when you want to avoid being too descriptive in your essay writing (Day, 2018).

Components of a good summary

* Transforms a large amount of information into a smaller volume
* Captures the points that are salient to your argument
* Demonstrates your understanding of a concept in a succinct way

**How to summarize**

Here are a few techniques to use to create a good summary. It is important to note that summarizing can be applied in your essays in order to provide your reader with a brief background on a concept, theory or study. However, these techniques can also be applied when you have been asked to write a summary on a topic, text or theme.

**Map a concept with bullet points**

Try reading a chunk of text (or an entire research paper) without taking notes. Once complete, write the three main things that you have remembered about the reading, and use that to craft your summary, or use the suggested framework below.

**Example 2.1**

Introduction Sentence: In [name of book], [author] explains [insert main idea]

Supporting Arguments: [Author] supports this view by pointing out [insert author's supporting arguments].

Final Point: In addition, [insert author's overarching argument and point].

**Summary:**

In "My Favorite Shoe," Treyvon Jones explains that Nike shoes are the best brand of running shoe for serious track athletes. Jones supports this view by pointing out that Nike shoes are more comfortable, last longer, and provide more cushioning for the feet. In addition, Jones points out that most professional runners use Nike (2006, p. 45).

(Example taken from Kearny, 2018) 5

**True Summary or Interpretive Summary?**

The difference between **true summary** and interpretive summary is as follows:

True summary concisely recaps the main point and key supporting points of an analytical source or the main subject and key features of a visual source. . . **Interpretive summary** simultaneously informs your reader of the content of your source and makes a point about it . . . giving the reader hints about your assessment of the source. . .It is thus best suited to descriptions of primary sources that you plan to analyse.

(The Harvard Writing Center, 2000)

**Example 2.1**

demonstrates a true summary. When writing an essay, it is likely that you will need to use one, if not both kinds of summary techniques; particularly to achieve a balance between description, analysis and evaluation. The interpretive summary is a critical summary, as you condense and assess a source as a whole. This can be particularly helpful when you need to critique or discuss a theory, as you can outline the main features, whilst highlighting any flaws or areas for further discussion. However, it is important to note that if you produce an interpretive summary, you should be mindful when placing this kind of ‘spin’ on the summary, as there is the potential for the original meaning to become distorted (The Harvard Writing Center, 2000). Example

**2.2 demonstrates an interpretive summary**:

**Example 2.2**

According to McLeod (2018), the purpose of Zimbardo’s (1973) prison experiment was to determine whether brutality amongst US prison guards was due to personality traits or environmental factors. To obtain realism, Zimbardo created a prison simulation in the basement of Stanford University; although it could be argued that any simulation of prison can never equate to a true experience, and is therefore, not applicable. 24 participants were randomly assigned to the role of guard or prisoner, which indicates some potential for bias in the assignment of roles. Prisoners were taunted, insulted, and subjected to physical punishment; resulting in a prisoner rebellion against the guards. The experiment was terminated after just six days, due to ethical concerns about the well-being of the participants. The findings of the study suggested support for the effects of the environment on behaviour, but it could still be argued that personality still contributed to some extent.

**Take advantage of size**

Summarizing can be a useful tool for condensing large amounts of information. In an academic reading and writing context: if you come across an entire chapter that covers a topic to perfection, then summarizing it will not only allow you to absorb a major chunk of information, but also present that information to your reader, should they wish to peruse it. You can help your reader out even further by indicating the exact information you are summarizing, by including the page numbers, as in **Example 2.3**  In “An Anthropologist on Mars,” Sacks notes that although there is little disagreement on the chief characteristics of autism, researchers have differed considerably on its causes. (pp. 22-48).

(Example adapted from University of Toronto, 2019)