

Paraphrasing and summarising

Paraphrasing

To paraphrase is to rewrite something using different words without changing the original meaning. This is what is usually meant by the phrase 'in your own words'. The paraphrase should be clearer and more easily understood than the original. It is usually similar in length to the original.

To paraphrase

1. Read the text carefully. Underline, or note, any important words.
2. Look up any difficult words, and try to find synonyms for them.
3. Try to find different ways of expressing phrases indicating time or place.
4. Rewrite each sentence. Try to simplify the sentence structure and the vocabulary without changing the meaning.
5. Revise what you have written, comparing it to the original. Your paraphrase should clarify the original.
6. Do not forget to include appropriate reference information at the end of your paraphrase.

Summarising

A summary is much shorter than the original text. It should communicate the main idea of the text and the main supporting points — written 'in your own words'. — in a very brief form. The summary should give someone who has not read the original a clear and accurate overview of the text. A formal summary should also include the author, title, year of publication and source of the original.

Writing a summary requires a thorough understanding of the content of the text and the ability to paraphrase.

To summarise

1. Record the author, title, year of publication and source of the text.
2. Skim the text. Note any sub-headings, or try to divide the text into sections.
3. Read the text carefully. Use a dictionary if necessary, and be prepared to read very difficult texts more than once.
4. Pay special attention to the first and last paragraphs. Try to identify the main idea or argument.
5. Identify the topic sentence in each paragraph. This is frequently the first sentence in the paragraph.
6. Identify the main support for the topic sentence.
7. Write the topic sentence of your summary. Include the author's name, the title of the text, the year of publication and the author's main idea or argument.

Titles of books should appear in *italics* with maximal or minimal capitalisation.

MAXIMAL *Good Style: Writing for Science and Technology*

MINIMAL *Good style: Writing for science and technology*

Titles of articles, chapters and short stories should appear in single inverted commas with minimal capitalisation.

MINIMAL 'Preparing for positive change'

8. Try to write one or two sentences for each paragraph. Include the main idea (usually a paraphrase of the topic sentence) and the main support for the topic sentence (also paraphrased).
9. Revise and rewrite.
10. Proofread and make corrections as required.