

PARAPHRASING

When you paraphrase, you rewrite information from an outside source in your own words without changing the meaning. Unlike when you use indirect quotation or reported speech, you do not simply change verb tense. In addition, when you paraphrase, you convey the author's idea but change the author's words and sentence structure. You think about the message the author is trying to send in the text, and then try to express that idea in your own way. A paraphrase may be shorter and more concise than the original, but only slightly. Because you include in your rewrite all or nearly all of the content of the original passage—including many of the details—a paraphrase is almost as long as the original.

ANALYZING THE MODEL

The writing model consists of two passages about language. One is an excerpt from an encyclopedia entry about language by an author named Robert Kispert. The other is a paraphrase of the excerpt.

Read the models. Then answer the questions.



Writing Model

ORIGINAL PASSAGE

A screenshot of a computer window titled "Writing Model". The window contains the following text:

1 Language is the main means of communication between peoples. 2 But so many different languages have developed that language has often been a barrier rather than an aid to understanding among peoples. 3 For many years, people have dreamed of setting up an international universal language which all people could speak and understand. 4 The arguments in favor of a universal language are simple and obvious. 5 If all peoples spoke the same tongue, cultural and economic ties might be much closer, and good will might increase between countries (Kispert).

Source: Kispert, Robert J. "Universal Language."



There are almost 7,000 living languages in the world today.

PARAPHRASE

1 Humans communicate through language. 2 Because there are so many different languages, however, people around the world have a difficult time understanding one another. 3 Some people have wished for a universal international language that speakers all over the world could understand. 4 Their reasons are straightforward and clear. 5 A universal language would build cultural and economic bonds. 6 It would also create better feelings among countries (Kispert).

Questions about the Model

1. How many sentences are there in the original passage? In the paraphrase?
2. How do the original passage and the paraphrase differ sentence by sentence? What are the differences between them in sentence structure and words?
 - a. What is the first word of the first sentence in the original passage? Where does this word appear in the first sentence of the paraphrase?
 - b. What is the first word of the second sentence in the original passage? What word replaces it in the second sentence of the paraphrase?
 - c. What words replace *have dreamed of* in the third sentence? What word replaces *arguments in favor of* in the fourth sentence?
 - d. Which sentence in the original becomes two sentences in the paraphrase?

PLAGIARISM AND PARAPHRASING

Learning to paraphrase properly can help you use information from outside sources accurately and ethically. It is essential to avoid committing plagiarism.

There are two kinds of plagiarism that you need to consider when paraphrasing.

1. When you use information from an outside source without citing the source (telling where you got the information), you are guilty of plagiarism.
2. Even when you cite your source, if your paraphrase is too similar to the original, you are guilty of plagiarism.

Reread the model on pages 58–59. Pay attention to the paraphrase. Then read these two paraphrases and decide which kind of plagiarism each example is guilty of.

UNACCEPTABLE PARAPHRASE 1

Humans communicate through language. However, because there are so many languages in the world, language acts as an obstacle instead of as an aid to understanding. People have long wished for a universal international language that speakers all over the world could understand. A universal language would certainly build cultural and economic bonds. It would also create better feelings among countries.

UNACCEPTABLE PARAPHRASE 2

Language is the principle means of communication between peoples. However, because there are numerous languages, language itself has frequently been a barrier rather than an aid to understanding among the world population. For many years, people have envisioned a common universal language that everyone in the world could communicate in. The reasons for having a universal language are clearly understandable. If the same tongue were spoken by all countries, they would undoubtedly become closer culturally and economically. It would probably also create good will among nations (Kispert).

Paraphrase 1 is plagiarism because the source is not cited. Paraphrase 2 is plagiarism because it is too similar to the original passage. For example, in the first sentence, only one word has been changed: *principle* replaces *main*. In the second sentence, only a few words have been changed. You can avoid the first kind of plagiarism by always citing your sources. You can avoid the second kind of plagiarism by learning to paraphrase correctly.

WRITING A SUCCESSFUL PARAPHRASE

To paraphrase correctly, you first need to make sure that you fully understand the original passage. Use this method to write a good paraphrase.

- Read the original passage several times until you understand it fully. Underline the key words. Look up unfamiliar words and find synonyms for them. It is not always possible to find synonyms for every word, especially technical vocabulary. In this case, use the original word.
- Take notes while you read. Write down only a few words for each idea—not complete sentences. Here are one writer's notes on the original passage about universal language:

language—people use to communicate—but so many—
difficult to understand one another—people wish—
universal international language—reasons: cultural,
economic bonds, better feelings between countries

- Make a brief outline:

A. Language—people use to communicate
1. So many languages make it difficult to understand one another.
2. People wish for one universal international language.
B. Reasons
1. Cultural, economic bonds
2. Better feelings between countries

- Write your paraphrase from your notes. Don't look at the original while you are writing.
- Check your paraphrase against the original to make sure you have not copied vocabulary or sentence structure too closely. Above all, make sure that you have not changed the meaning of the original or given any wrong information.
- Add in-text citations. Also add a works-cited list if appropriate.

PRACTICE 6**Choosing the Best Paraphrase**

Read each original passage. Then read the paraphrases in each group and decide which is the best. Label it *Best*. Label the others *Too sim.* (too similar), *No cit.* (no in-text citation), or *Inc. / Inacc.* (incomplete and / or inaccurate information).

ORIGINAL PASSAGE 1

Source: A passage titled “Late-blooming or Language Problem,” published in 2012 on the website of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. There are no authors listed.

The stages that children pass through in the development of language are very consistent. However the exact age when they hit these milestones varies a lot.

Best

- a. As children develop language skills, they usually go through the same stages, but they may reach the stages at different ages (“Late-blooming”).

No cit.

- b. Developing children may pass through linguistic stages at different ages although they will generally pass through each stage at some point.

Too sim.

- c. The stages that are passed through by children in language development are very consistent. However the exact time when they hit these milestones can be different (“Late-blooming”).

Inc. / Inacc.

- d. Language development is very different for different children, and there can be variation in the stages they go through (“Late-blooming”).

ORIGINAL PASSAGE 2

Source: The same as Passage 1.

The kind of language the child hears and how people respond to the child can affect the speed of language development.

- a. People’s response to the child and the kind of language the child hears can affect his rate of language development (“Late-bloomer”).

- b. Language can develop at different rates depending on the child’s exposure to language and the response he or she gets when using it (“Late-bloomer”).

- c. Rate of language development can be influenced by children’s exposure to language and response to their language use.

- d. Language develops more quickly if children are exposed to different languages and if they receive a response (“Late-bloomer”).

ORIGINAL PASSAGE 3

Source: A passage titled, "Speech and Language Disorders in the School Setting" from the same website as Passages 1 and 2.

Children with communication disorders frequently do not perform at grade level. They may struggle with reading. Similarly, they may have difficulty understanding and expressing spoken language. Individuals with reading and writing problems also may have trouble using language to think and learn.

- a. Communication disorders prevent children from learning and are evidence of low intelligence ("Speech and Language Disorders").
- b. Children with speech and language challenges can fall behind in school because of trouble processing text or comprehending and using speech. Difficulty reading and writing can lead to problems with thinking and learning.
- c. Children with communication disabilities often do not work at grade level. They may have challenges with reading or have trouble comprehending and using spoken language. People with reading and writing problems also may have trouble using language to process ideas ("Speech and Language Disorders").
- d. Communication disabilities can cause problems for children in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, listening, thinking, and learning, which can result in poor performance in school ("Speech and Language Disorders").

PRACTICE 7

Writing a Paraphrase

Read the passage from an article that supports bilingual education. Write a paraphrase on a separate sheet of paper. Follow the method for writing a paraphrase described on page 61.

ORIGINAL PASSAGE

Source: An editorial in the *Houston Chronicle*, published Thursday, February 16, 2012, and accessed online August 5, 2012. The title of the article is "Editorial: Children can, and should, learn more than one language." There is no author listed.

A powerful body of data shows that speaking more than one language arms kids with crucial real-world abilities. People who master two or more languages in childhood enjoy better cognitive development, leading to better academic performance across the board. Learning languages at a young age is also associated with better problem-solving, heightened verbal skills, and mental agility.

USING PARAPHRASES AS SUPPORT

STRATEGY

You previously learned how to use quotations as support for your ideas. Similarly, the purpose of learning to paraphrase is to be able to use paraphrases as supporting material in your writing. In fact, paraphrase is usually preferred over quotation in academic writing because it shows that the writer truly understands the information, and it is often easier to understand how the information relates to the writer's points. Thus, whenever the exact words of your source are not important, you should use paraphrase.

Notice how a student in a sociolinguistics class used a paraphrase of a passage from an online article about a dying language in Chile called *Huilliche* or *Huillichesungun* to support her idea.

ORIGINAL PASSAGE

Wequetrumao village hosts a kindergarten that teaches children elements of the language and culture. Ethnic and linguistic pride are extremely strong in this community, as evidenced by two young hip-hop performers who composed indigenous protest lyrics including words in Huillichesungun ("Disappearing Languages").

Source: "Disappearing Languages." *National Geographic*.

PARAPHRASE

According to research by National Geographic, many people in the community find the language to be an important part of their identity. Some members of the younger generation actually use Huilliche in hip-hop music. One village has a kindergarten where children can learn about their linguistic and cultural heritage ("Disappearing Languages").

COMPLETED PARAGRAPH WITH PARAPHRASE

Revitalizing dying languages is important for several reasons. First of all, language diversity makes life on earth more interesting. Just as it would be boring to have only few kinds of trees or flowers, a world with few languages would feel empty. Secondly, revitalizing dying languages is important to the communities who speak (or spoke) those languages. One example of this is Huilliche, the language of a native community in Chile. According to research by National Geographic, it has only a few remaining fluent speakers, most of whom are over 70. However, many people in the community find the language to be an important part of their identity. Some members of the younger generation actually use Huilliche in hip-hop music. One village has a kindergarten where children can learn about their linguistic and cultural heritage ("Disappearing Languages"). Clearly, it would be a mistake to deprive the world, and individual communities, of the beauty of these languages.

TRY IT OUT!

Write a paragraph in which you agree with this statement.

Some people feel that children who immigrate to a new country should not be taught only the language of the new country. They believe these children should be educated bilingually, that is, both in their first language and in the language of their new country.

1. Write a topic sentence that states your opinion.
2. Include all or part of your paraphrase from Practice 7: Writing a Paraphrase on page 63 as one of your supporting points. Make sure to add an in-text citation at the end of the paraphrase.
3. Include additional supporting sentences using your own ideas and personal supporting example, if possible.
4. Use transition signals to connect the ideas and make your paragraph flow smoothly.