"Saying it in your own words" is a common description of paraphrasing. It sounds easy. So long as you *have* "your own words." And so long as you understand the text you are putting *into* "your own words."

A paraphrase is different from a summary. A summary gives the main ideas of the original text. A summary leaves out some of the details or maybe all of them. Your paraphrase should not leave out anything from the text—or the part of the text—that you are paraphrasing.

A paraphrase is different from an opinion. Your paraphrase should not express your opinions about the original text. It should not say whether the text is well written. It should not say whether the ideas are good. It should say what the text says—but "in your own words."

There are many reasons why you might paraphrase a text, but you are basically telling what the text says without using a direct quote. Here is a text:

After school the children lined up and walked to their busses. It was windy and cold, but many of the children had not brought their coats.

Here is a direct quote of part of the text:

The text says, "It was windy and cold that day, but many of the children had not brought their coats."

* Notice that the part of the text that is quoted is given in exactly the same words as are in the original text.
* This is not too long of a quote, so it does not *have* to be paraphrased.
* However, it is not such a wonderfully expressed piece of writing. Paraphrasing it will not spoil its beauty.

So, here is a paraphrase of the same part of the text:

1. It was a cold, windy day, but many children did not have coats.

Here is another paraphrase:

1. Many children had no coats, despite the cold and wind that day.

Many of the words are the same in both of them. There are 17 words in the part we have taken from the original text.

1. It was a cold, windy day, but many children did not have coats. 10/13 or 10/17
2. Many children had no coats, despite the cold and wind that day. 5/12 or 5/17

You broke large sentences into smaller sentences.

You made larger sentences from smaller sentences.

You moved words and phrases within sentences.

You moved sentences within paragraphs.

You substituted antecedents for pronouns.

You substituted pronouns for antecedents.

You substituted words and phrases for the variables that stand for them (e.g., otherwise, elsewhere).

You substituted variables (e.g., otherwise, elsewhere) for words and phrases they stand for.

You substituted synonyms for less familiar words.

You added words identifying the original text's structure.

You added words identifying the original text's rhetorical devices.

Beyond paraphrasing:

You added examples.

You added similes and metaphors.

You added counter-examples.