

Using the work of other writers

An important aspect of academic writing is making use of the ideas of others. When using other writers' ideas, it is important to ensure one's academic integrity by avoiding plagiarism.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition.

Avoiding plagiarism

1. Paraphrasing

- Involves putting a section of a text into your own words
- Does not copy source word for word
- Changes sentence structure or phrasing of a passage, but keeps the original meaning
- Must be referenced

Points to remember:

- Make a list of the main ideas.
- Identify the meaning relationships between words/ideas, e.g. cause/effect, generalisation, contrast, and express them in a different way.
- Find alternative words/phrases (synonyms), but do not change specialized vocabulary.
- Change the grammar of a text: nouns to verbs, adjectives to adverbs etc.
- Change the sentence structure, e.g. active form changed to passive form.
- Break up long sentences, combine short sentences.

Exercise

Study the following sentences and decide how the writer has paraphrased them.

- a) Memory is the capacity for storing and retrieving information.
Memory is the facility for keeping and recovering data.
- b) Paul Ekman from the University of California has conducted a long series of experiments on how nonverbal behaviour may reveal real inner states.
Paul Ekman who works at the University of California has performed a sequence of investigations on the way nonverbal behaviour may disclose real internal conditions.
- c) Consequently in a sense one may speak of the Common Law as unwritten law in contrast with Statute Law, which is written law.
In a sense, therefore, one may speak of the Common Law as unwritten law in contrast with Statute Law, which is written law.
- d) This rewriting of history was not so much a matter of a new start.
This rewriting of history was not so much a matter of starting again.
- e) Politically, it was a bad decision.
From a political point of view, it was a bad decision.

- g) We can relate a study of this kind to texts in other media too.
A study of this kind can be related to texts in other media too.
- h) In 1851 the average family size was 4.7, roughly the same as it had been in the seventeenth century, but the 1½ million couples who married during the 1860s, which the historian G. M. Young described as the best decade in English history to have been brought up in, raised the figure to 6.2.
In 1851 the average family size was 4.7, roughly the same as it had been in the seventeenth century. However, the 1½ million couples who married during the 1860s, which the historian G. M. Young described as the best decade in English history to have been brought up in, raised the figure to 6.2.
- i) The third National Government followed upon the resignation of the Liberal ministers and of the free trader, Snowden. This happened in September 1932. After this it became little more than a Conservative government. A few ex-Labour and Liberal politicians were added. They all owed their seats to an electoral pact with the Conservatives.
The third National Government followed upon the resignation of the Liberal ministers and of the free trader, Snowden, in September 1932, after which it became little more than a Conservative government, with the addition of a few ex-Labour and Liberal politicians, all owing their seats to an electoral pact with the Conservatives.

2. Summarising

- Presents the main ideas in your own words, summing up the main points
- Does not copy source word for word
- Presents a broad overview, so is usually much shorter than the original text
- Must be referenced

Points to remember:

- Think about the purpose of writing a summary. Is it to introduce your main points or to support your main points?
- Select the relevant information and find the main ideas.
- Change the structure of the text.
- Simplify the text.
- Rewrite the main ideas.

Examples:

- a) People whose professional activity lies in the field of politics are not, on the whole, conspicuous for their respect for factual accuracy.
Politicians often lie.
- b) It is undeniable that the large majority of non-native learners of English experience a number of problems in attempting to master the phonetic patterns of the language.
Many learners find English pronunciation difficult.
- c) It is not uncommon to encounter sentences which, though they contain a great number of words and are constructed in a highly complex way, none the less turn out on inspection to convey very little meaning of any kind.
Some long and complicated sentences mean very little.

Exercise

Summarise the following paragraph in about 30 words.

One restriction would arguably be on food advertising. 95% of these during children's television programmes were for products high in fat, salt or sugar (Grissom, 2010) and many, including the World Health Organisation, believe that there is a link between such foods and increasing levels of obesity and high blood pressure. Yet, for every \$1 spent by the WHO to combat these effects of a poor diet, the global food industry spends \$500, part of an annual industry worth \$25 billion (WHO, 2009). It is obviously not a fair fight and as children's health is at stake, there is a strong case for a limitation on food advertising to the young.

3. Quotations

- Uses the original words from the source material
- Usually a brief section from the text
- Appears between quotation marks
- Must be referenced

Points to remember

- Use quotations sparingly. Quotations should support your work, not replace it.
- Every direct quotation should appear between quotation marks (" ") and exactly reproduce text, including punctuation and capital letters.
- A short quotation often works well integrated into a sentence.
- Longer quotations (more than 3 lines of text) should start on a new line, be indented and in italics.

Example

Critical debates about the value of popular culture often raise the spectres of Americanisation and cultural imperialism, particular issues for a 'provincial' culture. However, as Bell and Bell (1993) point out in their study of Australian-American cultural relations: "culture is never simply imposed 'from above' but is negotiated through existing patterns and traditions." (Bell & Bell 1993, p. 9)