

Paraphrasing

Summarizing ideas from previous scholarship is a common and essential element in academic writing. It is also a challenging task, though, not least of all because plagiarism becomes a factor in some cases. Many suggestions for paraphrasing successfully employ the careful replacement of words with synonyms. The process described in this handout extends that strategy.¹

Step 1: Identify essential points & the relationships between them

A. Make a list of the important points of the passage you want to paraphrase as well as the relationship between these points.

Example: Contrary to the common belief that spinning of cars mainly occurs on slippery roads at high speeds, the statistics show that by far most severe accidents occur on dry roads and at speeds between 60 km/h and 100 km/h (van Zanten, 2002).

Key points:

- The common belief is that spinning of cars mainly occurs on slippery roads and at high speeds
- Most severe accidents occur on dry roads and at speeds between 60 km/h and 100 km/h

Relationship:

- Common belief and fact are not in agreement

B. Once you identify your key points and the relationship between them, list linking phrases or other verbs that express the connection.

Linking phrases:

- Although
- However
- While
- Rather than

Verbs:

- Due to
- Caused by
- Can be attributed to

¹ This process is adapted from Feak, Christine B, and John M Swales. 2009. *Telling a Research Story: Writing a Literature Review*. The Michigan Series in English for Academic & Professional Purposes. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 82-85. We also use their example here.

Step 2: Identify available synonyms & changes to parts of speech

A. Next, make a list of important words and possible synonyms for each. Also, list any important additions or deletions that may be appropriate.

Synonyms:

- Spinning of cars – crashes
- Slippery – slick, wet
- Severe – serious, severity
- Dry – good conditions
- Occur – happen, take place, occurrence
- Most – the majority of
- Common – widespread
- Belief – believe, think

Additions/Deletions:

- Include *who* holds the belief — people
- Include researchers?
- Delete point about common belief?

After these steps, you are able to write a paraphrased summary like this:

Although it is widely believed that most car accidents can be attributed to high speeds and poor road conditions, in fact, according to van Zanten, the majority of serious accidents occur when roads are dry and the vehicle is traveling between 60 and 100 km/h (2002).

Here is a succinct list of the steps for easy reference in the future.

Passage:

Key Points:

Relationship(s):

Linking Phrases & Verbs that Express the Relationship(s):

Synonyms:

Additions/Deletions: