

Plagiarism - avoid it with acceptable paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a valuable skill, because it helps you to develop a full understanding of the material and allows you to show your skills without too many direct quotes.


A proper paraphrase requires you to present an author's particular thoughts and ideas using your own unique phrases, sentences and structures while retaining the meaning. Poor paraphrasing often ends up as negligent or unintentional plagiarism, particularly when you are dealing with difficult theories or concepts, so it is important to learn to paraphrase correctly.

It is important to understand that paraphrasing does NOT mean using short sentences and phrases copied from different sources and joining them together to form sensible paragraphs. This is called patchwriting and is academically dishonest.

Academics are also increasingly able to detect unacceptable paraphrases and direct copying by noting sudden changes in font; lack of recent references; and identifying changes in writing styles. In addition, technology-assisted techniques like searching a phrase in Google or other scanning software are often used to confirm suspicions. Thus the risk of getting caught is high.



All paraphrased material should be appropriately referenced.

 To assist good paraphrasing you may consider the following work methods:

- Never write with the original text in sight, just refer to your own notes.
- Note down the main ideas of the text quickly and roughly while reading through.
- Reread the passage until you can recall it without having to look at the original.
- Before writing, explain the theories, material, or data to someone else (or to yourself).
- After writing the paraphrase, re-read the original text to make sure you have all the essential information correct and check you have not accidentally copied the author's phrases.

 Here is an example of how to paraphrase.

This is an **original passage** from Schminke, M., Arnaud, A. and Kuenzi, M., 2007, "The Power of Ethical Work Climates." *Organizational Dynamics*, vol. 36 issue 2, pp. 171-186:

"Moral sensitivity can be improved through training. To enhance moral awareness, organizations first need to explain clearly what constitutes unethical and illegal behavior, and to clarify desired employee behaviors with respect to all organizational stakeholders. This requires clearly communicating formal, comprehensive ethics policies and procedures (e.g., ethics codes) to employees at all levels, including managers, so as to provide formal boundaries for decisions, activities, and behaviors in the organization. However, awareness training should also probe the informal grey areas of comprehensive ethics policies. It may do so through the use of scenario studies, games, and interactive videos, which include ethical dilemmas that employees may face in their workplace. Such training opportunities allow individuals sufficient exposure to the practice of identifying ethical issues in realistic settings."

1. Acceptable paraphrase

Organizations can take steps to improve the ethical sensitivity of their employees by providing clear guidance on what is appropriate ethical behaviour and where the grey informal difficulties may lie through variety of methods including dilemmas, games and scenarios (Schminke, M., Arnaud, A. and Kuenzi, M., 2007, p. 180)

2. **Unacceptable paraphrase** because it is a collection of direct quotes from the original, which have only been organised in a different order and no quotation marks are included:

Moral sensitivity can be improved through training, which can be delivered through the use of scenario studies, games, and interactive videos, which include ethical dilemmas that employees may face in their workplace. (Schminke, M., Arnaud, A. and Kuenzi, M., 2007, p. 180)

3. **Unacceptable paraphrase** because it does not accurately convey the message of the original paragraph:

Employees' moral sensitivity can be only improved through the use of difficult real life scenarios which highlight the grey areas of adopted ethical policies within the company. (Schminke, M., Arnaud, A. and Kuenzi, M., 2007, p. 180)


More Resources



If you wish to learn more about the skill of paraphrasing, you can start by visiting the following internet site:

- [Paraphrase: Write it in Your Own Words](#) , Purdue University Online Writing Lab



The University's [Learning Centre](#)  runs academic reading and writing courses.