

Faculté : Mathématiques et Informatique
 Département: Socle Commun Mathématique et Informatique
 Module: Written Expression Techniques
 Module Convenor: Dr Abdelhamid
 Level: 1st year



PARAPHRASING

Paraphrasing involves changing a text so that it is quite dissimilar to the source yet retains all the meaning. Although paraphrasing techniques are used in summary writing, paraphrasing does not aim to shorten the length of a text, merely to restate the text.

For example,

'Evidence of a lost civilization has been found off the coast of China.'

could be paraphrased:

'Remains of an ancient society have been discovered in the sea near China.'

Exercice 1

A good paraphrase is significantly different from the wording of the original, without altering the meaning at all. Read the text below and then decide which is the best paraphrase, (a) or (b).

Ancient Egypt collapsed in about 2180 BC. Studies conducted of the mud from the River Nile showed that at this time the mountainous regions which feed the Nile suffered from a prolonged drought. This would have had a devastating effect on the ability of Egyptian society to feed itself.

- a) The sudden ending of Egyptian civilization over 4,000 years ago was probably caused by changes in the weather in the region to the south. Without the regular river flooding there would not have been enough food.
- b) Research into deposits of the Egyptian Nile indicate that a long dry period in the mountains at the river's source may have led to a lack of water for irrigation around 2180 BC, which was when the collapse of Egyptian society began.

Paraphrasing Techniques

1. Changing vocabulary:

studies > research

society > civilisation

mud > deposits

2. Changing word class:

Egypt (n.) > Egyptian (adj.)

mountainous regions (adj. + n.) > in the mountains (n.)

3. Changing word order:

Ancient Egypt collapsed > the collapse of Egyptian society began

Exercise 2

Find synonyms for the words in italic.

a) Sleep scientists have found that *traditional remedies* for insomnia, *such as* counting sheep, are ineffective.

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b) Instead, they have *found* that *imagining a pleasant scene* is likely to *send you to sleep quickly*.

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c) The *research team divided* 50 insomnia sufferers into three groups.

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d) One group *was told to imagine* a waterfall, while another group *tried* sheep counting.

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Exercise 3

Change the word class of the words in italic, and then rewrite the sentences.

a) A third group was given no *special instructions* about going to sleep.

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b) It was *found* that the group thinking of waterfalls fell asleep 20 minutes quicker.

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c) Mechanical tasks like counting sheep are *apparently* too boring to make people sleepy.

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Exercise 4

Change the word order of the following sentences.

a) There are many practical applications to research into insomnia.

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b) About one in ten people are thought to suffer from severe insomnia.

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c) It is calculated that the cost of insomnia for the American economy may be \$35 billion a year.

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Exercise 5

Combine all these techniques to paraphrase the paragraph as fully as possible.

Sleep scientists have found that traditional remedies for insomnia, such as counting sheep, are ineffective. Instead, they have found that imagining a pleasant scene is likely to send you to sleep quickly. The research team divided 50 insomnia sufferers into three groups. One group imagined watching a waterfall, while another group tried sheep counting. A third group was given no special instructions about going to sleep. It was found that the group thinking of waterfalls fell asleep 20 minutes quicker. Mechanical tasks like counting sheep are apparently too boring to make people sleepy. There are many practical applications for research into insomnia. About one in ten people are thought to suffer from severe insomnia. It is calculated that the cost of insomnia for the American economy may be \$35 billion a year.

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Exercise 6

Use the same techniques to paraphrase the following text.

Before the last century no humans had visited Antarctica, and even today the vast continent has a winter population of less than 200 people. However, a recent report from a New Zealand government agency outlines the scale of the pollution problem in the ice and snow. Although untouched compared with other regions in the world, the bitter cold of Antarctica means that the normal process of decay is prevented. As a result some research stations are surrounded by the rubbish of nearly 60 years' operations.

Despite popular belief, the polar continent is really a desert, with less precipitation than the Sahara. In the past, snowfall slowly covered the waste left behind, like beer cans or dead ponies, but now, possibly due to global warming, the ice is thinning and these are being exposed. Over 10 years ago the countries using Antarctica agreed a treaty on waste disposal, under which everything is to be taken home, and this is slowly improving the situation. However, the scientists do not want everything removed. The remains of very early expeditions at the beginning of the twentieth century have acquired historical value and will be preserved.

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