

Paraphrasing Guide: How to Paraphrase Correctly at University

A practical, no-fluff guide to paraphrasing sources properly — covering technique, process, common pitfalls, and how to avoid accidental plagiarism.

□ Reading time: 24–28 minutes

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A practical, no-fluff guide to paraphrasing sources properly — covering technique, process, common pitfalls, and how to avoid accidental plagiarism.

□ **Featured Snippet Answer:** Paraphrasing means expressing someone else's idea entirely in your own words and sentence structure, while still crediting the original source with a citation. Effective paraphrasing changes both the vocabulary and the structure of the original sentence — changing only a few words while keeping the same structure ("patchwriting") is still considered plagiarism at UK universities.

AI Overview Summary: Strong paraphrasing requires genuinely understanding a source well enough to restate its idea from memory, in your own words and structure, then citing it. The most common paraphrasing

mistake is swapping a few words for synonyms while keeping the original sentence structure intact — markers and plagiarism-detection software both recognise this pattern as inadequate paraphrasing.

Quick Answer

To paraphrase correctly, read the original source until you fully understand the idea, set the text aside, and write the idea in your own words and sentence structure from memory — then compare your version to the original and cite the source. Good paraphrasing changes both wording and structure; changing only isolated words while keeping the original sentence order is a common mistake known as patchwriting, and it is treated as a form of plagiarism.

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What Paraphrasing Actually Is

Paraphrasing is the process of restating someone else's idea, argument, or finding entirely in your own words and your own sentence structure, while still crediting the original source through citation. It is not simply a matter of finding synonyms for a handful of words in an existing sentence — genuine paraphrasing requires you to understand the underlying idea well enough to express it independently, without leaning on the original author's phrasing or structure.

This distinction matters enormously in UK higher education, where paraphrasing is one of the most common areas where students unintentionally commit plagiarism. Many students paraphrase in good faith, genuinely believing they have reworded a source adequately, only to find their work flagged by Turnitin or a marker for excessive similarity to the original text.

❑ **Expert Tip:** A reliable test of genuine paraphrasing: could you explain the idea to a friend, out loud, without looking at the original text at all? If you can, you understand it well enough to paraphrase it properly. If you can't, you're not ready to paraphrase it yet — read the source again first.

Paraphrasing vs Quoting vs Summarising

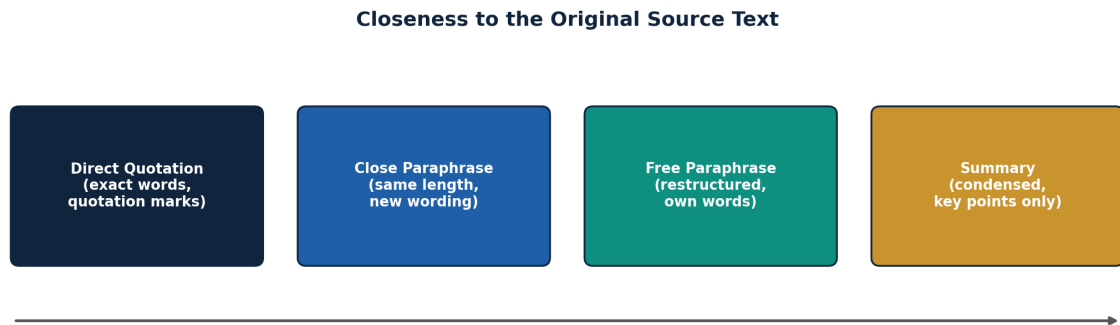


Figure 2: All four approaches require citation, but the amount of the original wording and structure retained decreases from left to right.

Technique	What It Does	When to Use It
Direct Quotation	Reproduces the source's exact words, in quotation marks	When the original wording itself is significant (e.g. a precise legal or technical definition)
Close Paraphrase	Restates the idea in new wording, similar length to the original	When you need to preserve most of the original detail but avoid direct quotation
Free Paraphrase	Restates the idea in your own words and structure, often more concisely	The most common and generally preferred approach for integrating source ideas
Summary	Condenses a much longer passage or whole source down to its key points	When you need the overall gist of a source rather than a specific detailed claim

⚠ **Common Mistake:** Treating paraphrasing as a lighter version of quoting — for example, quoting most of a sentence and only paraphrasing a small part of it. If more than a few consecutive words match the original exactly, that portion needs quotation marks or further rewording.

Why Paraphrasing Matters

Reason	Why It Matters
Academic integrity	Demonstrates that ideas are properly attributed rather than presented as your own
Genuine understanding	Forces you to process and understand a source rather than copying it superficially
Avoiding plagiarism penalties	Inadequate paraphrasing is one of the most common causes of academic misconduct cases
Stronger academic voice	Well-integrated paraphrasing reads more fluently than strings of quotations
Consistent tone	Lets you match the source's ideas to your own writing style and register

❑ **Lecturer Advice:** Most UK universities' academic integrity policies treat "inadequate paraphrasing" and "patchwriting" as forms of plagiarism, even when a citation is present — the citation credits the idea, but you are still responsible for expressing it in genuinely your own words.

The Four Core Paraphrasing Techniques

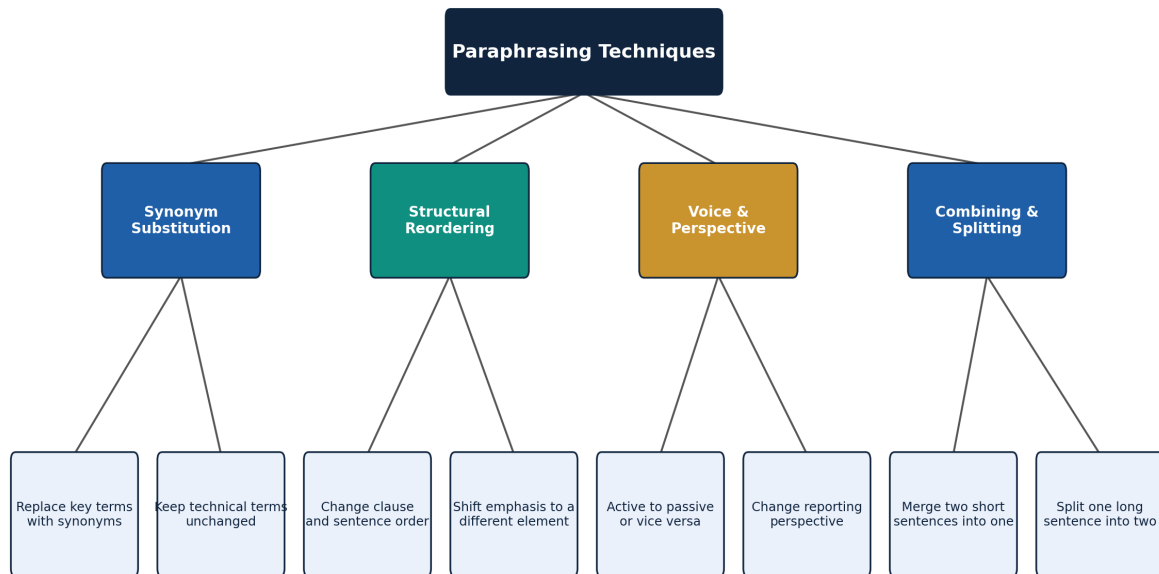


Figure 1: The four core paraphrasing techniques, most effective when combined together rather than used in isolation.

Technique	What It Involves	Example
Synonym Substitution	Replacing non-technical key terms with appropriate synonyms	"significant" → "substantial"
Structural Reordering	Changing the order of clauses or the sentence as a whole	Moving the cause clause before the effect clause
Voice and Perspective Change	Switching between active and passive voice, or changing reporting perspective	"Researchers found..." → "It was found that..."
Combining/ Splitting Sentences	Merging two short sentences into one, or splitting one long sentence into two	Restructuring for both clarity and originality

❑ **Worked Example:** Original: "Researchers found that sleep deprivation significantly impairs cognitive performance in young adults." Paraphrase using all four techniques: "Cognitive performance among young adults is notably

weakened when sleep is insufficient, according to research findings (Smith, 2021)."

Synonym Substitution in Practice

Synonym substitution is often the first technique students reach for, but used alone it is the weakest form of paraphrasing — and if applied without any structural change, it can still be flagged as inadequate paraphrasing or patchwriting.

Guidance	Why It Matters
Only substitute non-technical vocabulary	Technical or discipline-specific terms often have no true synonym and should stay unchanged
Check the synonym's precise meaning	Near-synonyms can subtly shift meaning (see the Academic Writing Style Guide for examples)
Never rely on substitution alone	Combine with at least one structural change to avoid patchwriting
Avoid a thesaurus-only approach	Overly obscure synonyms can make writing sound unnatural or even nonsensical

⚠ **Common Mistake:** Using a thesaurus to swap out individual words while leaving the sentence structure completely untouched. This is the textbook definition of patchwriting, and it is very reliably detected by plagiarism-detection software such as Turnitin.

Choosing appropriate synonyms for academic contexts

Not every synonym listed in a thesaurus is appropriate for academic writing — some carry the wrong register, connotation, or level of formality for a university assignment, even if they are technically correct substitutes.

Original Word	Weak Synonym Choice	Stronger Synonym Choice
"important"	"big deal"	"significant" / "critical"
"shows"	"proves" (overstates certainty)	"indicates" / "demonstrates"
"a lot of"	"tons of"	"a substantial number of"
"get"	"grab"	"obtain" / "acquire"

❑ **Expert Tip:** When checking a thesaurus, always read the synonym back in the full sentence before committing to it — some synonyms are correct in isolation but sound clumsy or change the emphasis once placed in context.

Structural Reordering in Practice

Changing the structure of a sentence, not just its vocabulary, is what separates genuine paraphrasing from superficial word-swapping. This is often the single most effective technique for producing a paraphrase that reads as authentically your own.

Original Structure	Reordered Structure
"Because X happened, Y occurred."	"Y occurred as a result of X."
"A caused B, which led to C."	"C resulted from B, itself a consequence of A."

Original Structure	Reordered Structure
"Researchers examined X using method Y."	"Using method Y, researchers examined X."

❑ **Worked Example:** Original: "Because remote working increased significantly during the pandemic, many organisations invested heavily in digital infrastructure." Reordered paraphrase: "Substantial organisational investment in digital infrastructure followed the marked rise in remote working during the pandemic (Taylor, 2022)."

Reordering at the paragraph level

Structural reordering can also apply above the sentence level — reorganising which point comes first across a paragraph summarising several related ideas from a source, rather than mirroring the source's original sequence exactly.

Practice	Why It Helps
Present the source's points in a different logical order	Reduces structural similarity to the original passage
Group related points differently than the source did	Reflects your own analytical organisation of the material
Lead with the point most relevant to your argument	Makes the paraphrase serve your essay's purpose, not just the source's

❑ **Expert Tip:** If you're paraphrasing a whole paragraph rather than a single sentence, try outlining the source's key points from memory first, then decide your own logical order for presenting them — this naturally avoids mirroring the source's structure.

Voice and Perspective Change

Shifting between active and passive voice, or changing how a claim is attributed, is a useful technique that also allows you to adjust emphasis — for example, foregrounding the finding itself rather than the researcher who produced it.

Original Voice	Alternative Voice
"The researchers concluded that the intervention was effective." (active)	"The intervention was concluded to be effective." (passive)
"Scientists have observed this pattern repeatedly." (active)	"This pattern has been repeatedly observed." (passive)

⚠ **Common Mistake:** Changing only the voice (active to passive) while leaving every other word identical to the original. Voice change should be combined with at least synonym substitution or reordering, not used as the sole technique.

Changing reporting perspective

Beyond active/passive voice, you can also change whose perspective a claim is reported from — for instance, shifting from reporting what the source says to reporting what the evidence shows.

Original Perspective	Shifted Perspective
"Jones (2020) argues that the policy failed."	"The policy's failure is a central claim in Jones's (2020) analysis."
"The study shows a strong correlation."	"A strong correlation emerges from the study's findings."

❑ **Worked Example:** This technique is particularly useful when paraphrasing multiple sources that make similar claims, since it lets you vary your sentence openings across a paragraph rather than starting every sentence with the author's name.

Combining and Splitting Sentences

Changing how ideas are grouped into sentences — combining two short sentences into one, or splitting one long sentence into two — is a simple but effective technique that changes the surface structure while preserving the original meaning.

Original	Combined/Split Version
"The sample size was small. This limited the study's generalisability."	"The study's generalisability was limited by its small sample size."
"The policy addressed multiple issues including funding, staffing, and infrastructure, all of which had been raised in prior consultations."	"The policy addressed several issues raised in prior consultations. These included funding, staffing, and infrastructure."

❑ **Expert Tip:** Combining or splitting sentences is especially useful when a source's sentence length doesn't match the register of your own writing — a source with unusually long or short sentences can be reshaped to fit your essay's overall rhythm.

The Paraphrasing Process

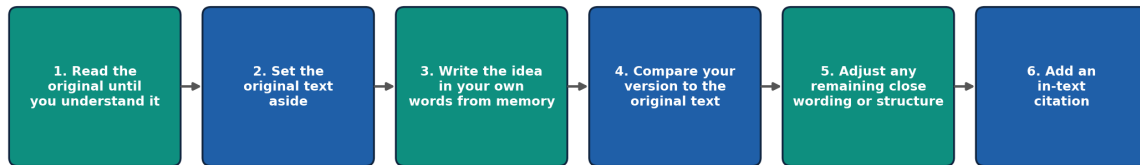


Figure 3: The six-step paraphrasing process — reading, stepping away from the source, and comparing are what most reliably prevent accidental plagiarism.

Step	What Happens Here
1. Read the original until you understand it	Read slowly enough that you could explain the idea without re-reading it
2. Set the original text aside	Physically close the book, tab, or PDF before you start writing
3. Write the idea in your own words from memory	This is what prevents your sentence structure from mirroring the source
4. Compare your version to the original	Check for accidentally identical phrases or structure
5. Adjust any remaining close wording or structure	Revise further if any section still closely resembles the original
6. Add an in-text citation	Paraphrasing still requires citation — it is not "your own idea" simply because it's reworded

❑ **Expert Tip:** Step 2 — setting the original text aside — is the single most effective habit for avoiding patchwriting. Writing while looking directly at the

source almost always produces sentences too structurally similar to the original.

Paraphrasing and Plagiarism: Where the Line Is

Many students paraphrase in good faith but still cross into plagiarism without realising it, usually because they believe changing a portion of the wording is sufficient. UK universities generally treat the following as unacceptable, even with a citation present.

Practice	Why It's Still Considered Plagiarism
Patchwriting (changing a few words, keeping structure)	Too structurally close to the original; not genuinely your own expression
Paraphrasing without any citation	Even fully reworded ideas require attribution to the original source
Paraphrasing a paraphrase (from a secondary source)	Can compound inaccuracies; cite the original source directly where possible
Over-reliance on paraphrasing one source repeatedly	Can constitute over-reliance even if each instance is technically well-paraphrased

⚠ **Common Mistake:** Assuming that adding a citation automatically makes any level of paraphrasing acceptable. A citation credits the source of the idea, but you are still responsible for expressing that idea in a genuinely independent way.

📌 **Lecturer Advice:** If you're ever uncertain whether a paraphrase is close enough to count as patchwriting, run a side-by-side comparison of your

sentence and the original. If more than a short phrase matches word-for-word, or the sentence structure is identical, revise further.

Common Paraphrasing Mistakes

#	Mistake	Why It Weakens the Work
1	Patchwriting (synonym swaps only, same structure)	Reads as inadequately reworded; often flagged by plagiarism software
2	Paraphrasing without citing the source	Misattributes the idea as entirely your own
3	Copying more than a short phrase verbatim without quotation marks	Constitutes plagiarism even within an otherwise paraphrased passage
4	Over-paraphrasing to the point of distorting the original meaning	Misrepresents the source's actual claim
5	Paraphrasing highly technical or legally precise language	Can lose necessary precision; direct quotation may be more appropriate
6	Relying on a single technique (e.g. only synonym substitution)	Produces weak, easily detected paraphrasing
7	Paraphrasing while looking directly at the source text	Tends to mirror the source's structure unintentionally
8	Using an AI paraphrasing tool without checking the output	Can introduce factual errors or unnatural phrasing
9	Failing to compare your paraphrase against the original afterward	Misses accidental close matches
10		

#	Mistake	Why It Weakens the Work
	Paraphrasing a source you don't fully understand	Produces vague or inaccurate restatements of the original idea

⚠ **Common Mistake:** Treating paraphrasing as a purely mechanical word-replacement task rather than a comprehension exercise. If you don't understand the source, no amount of careful wording will produce an accurate paraphrase.

Weak vs Strong Paraphrase Examples

Original	Weak Paraphrase (Patchwriting)	Strong Paraphrase
"Climate change poses significant risks to global food security."	"Climate change poses considerable risks to worldwide food security."	"Global food supplies face growing threats as a consequence of climate change (Patel, 2022)."
"The study found a strong correlation between exercise and mental wellbeing."	"The research discovered a powerful correlation between exercise and mental wellbeing."	"Mental wellbeing and physical activity levels were shown to be closely linked in the study's findings (Green, 2021)."
"Effective leadership requires clear communication and emotional intelligence."	"Effective leadership needs clear communication and emotional intelligence."	"Clear communication combined with emotional intelligence underpins effective leadership, according to Chen (2020)."

❑ **Expert Tip:** Notice that the "weak" column changes only a word or two while keeping the original sentence structure entirely intact — this is exactly the pattern that plagiarism-detection software is designed to catch.

Subject-Specific Paraphrasing Examples

❑ **Business/Management:** Paraphrase management theory carefully — frameworks like SWOT or Porter's Five Forces should be referenced by name rather than reworded, while the surrounding explanation is paraphrased.

❑ **Sciences/Lab Reports:** Paraphrase methodology descriptions with care, since precise technical steps may need to stay close to the original; consider quoting exact measurements or protocols instead.

❑ **Nursing/Healthcare:** Paraphrase clinical guidelines cautiously — the precise wording of a recommendation can carry specific clinical meaning that a loose paraphrase might distort.

❑ **Law:** Legal definitions and statutory wording are often best directly quoted rather than paraphrased, since precise wording can carry specific legal weight.

❑ **Humanities (English, History):** Paraphrase critics' arguments in your own analytical voice, reserving direct quotation for particularly distinctive or memorable phrasing.

❑ **Computer Science/Engineering:** Paraphrase conceptual explanations freely, but keep technical terms, algorithm names, and code syntax unchanged and clearly attributed.

❑ **Psychology:** Paraphrase study findings precisely, taking care not to overstate statistical results beyond what the original source actually reports.

❑ **Education:** Paraphrase pedagogical theory in plain, applied language suited to classroom practice, while still citing the originating theorist.

❑ **Finance/Accounting:** Paraphrase regulatory or standards-based text cautiously, as with law — precise figures and terms often should remain unchanged or quoted.

❑ **Marketing:** Paraphrase consumer behaviour theory and case findings, adapting the register to fit a more applied, practice-oriented assignment style.

AI Paraphrasing Tools: Risks and Limitations

AI-based paraphrasing and "rewriting" tools have become widely available, but relying on them uncritically carries real academic risks that students should understand before using one.

Risk	Why It Matters
Detectable patterns	Many AI paraphrasing tools produce recognisable stylistic patterns that some plagiarism and AI-detection tools can flag

Risk	Why It Matters
Factual drift	Automated rewording can subtly change or distort the original meaning without you noticing
Reduced understanding	Outsourcing the rewording step means you may not actually understand the source material
Institutional policy risk	Many UK universities restrict or prohibit AI tool use for paraphrasing coursework — always check your specific policy
Unnatural phrasing	AI-generated paraphrases can sound stilted or inconsistent with your own writing voice

⚠ **Common Mistake:** Assuming an AI paraphrasing tool automatically produces an "original" or "safe" version of a source. Many institutions treat AI-paraphrased text used without disclosure as an academic integrity concern — always check your university's specific policy before use.

📌 **Lecturer Advice:** The safest approach remains the manual read-understand-write-from-memory process described earlier in this guide. It builds genuine understanding of your sources, which is valuable well beyond avoiding a plagiarism flag.

Common Paraphrasing Myths

Myth	Reality
"If I cite the source, I can word it however I like"	Citation credits the idea but doesn't excuse copying the original structure or wording closely

Myth	Reality
"Changing every third word is enough"	This is patchwriting and is reliably detected by plagiarism-detection software
"Paraphrasing means making it longer and more complicated"	Good paraphrasing prioritises clarity, not unnecessary complexity
"AI paraphrasing tools are a safe shortcut"	Many carry detection and institutional policy risks; always check your specific rules
"You never need to paraphrase technical or legal terms"	True for the terms themselves, but the surrounding explanation usually still needs paraphrasing

❑ **Expert Tip:** When in doubt about what your specific institution considers acceptable paraphrasing, check your academic integrity or plagiarism policy directly, or ask your module tutor — expectations can vary slightly between institutions and disciplines.

Common Mistakes

#	Mistake	Why It Weakens the Work
1	Patchwriting instead of genuine paraphrasing	Easily detected and treated as plagiarism
2	Forgetting to cite a paraphrased idea	Misattributes the source's idea as your own
3	Copying short but distinctive phrases without quotation marks	Still counts as unattributed direct copying

#	Mistake	Why It Weakens the Work
4	Paraphrasing without fully understanding the source	Produces inaccurate or vague restatements
5	Relying on only one paraphrasing technique	Produces weak, easily identifiable paraphrasing
6	Writing while looking directly at the source text	Tends to mirror the original's structure
7	Using AI tools without checking institutional policy	Risks an academic integrity concern
8	Distorting the original meaning through over-paraphrasing	Misrepresents the source's actual claim
9	Paraphrasing legally or technically precise language loosely	Loses necessary precision; quoting may be safer
10	Not comparing the final paraphrase against the original	Misses accidental close similarity
11	Over-relying on a thesaurus for word choice alone	Can produce unnatural or imprecise vocabulary
12	Paraphrasing the same source too repeatedly across an assignment	Can signal over-reliance on a single source
13	Ignoring institution-specific plagiarism policy nuances	Risks non-compliance even with a good-faith paraphrase
14	Assuming a citation alone resolves any wording similarity	Citation and original expression are two separate requirements
15	Paraphrasing a source you found via a secondary citation without checking the original	Can propagate errors from the secondary source

⚠ **Common Mistake:** Believing that "paraphrasing" and "citing" are the same safeguard. They serve different purposes — citation credits the source, while genuine paraphrasing (not patchwriting) ensures the expression is authentically yours.

Paraphrasing Checklist

☐ Printable Paraphrasing Checklist

- ☐ I fully understand the source's idea before attempting to paraphrase it
- ☐ I wrote my paraphrase without looking directly at the original text
- ☐ My paraphrase changes both wording and sentence structure
- ☐ I have compared my paraphrase against the original for accidental similarity
- ☐ I have kept necessary technical or legal terms unchanged and defined
- ☐ I have added an in-text citation to credit the original source
- ☐ My paraphrase accurately reflects the original meaning, without distortion
- ☐ I have checked my institution's specific policy on AI paraphrasing tools

Quick Reference: Useful Synonym Swaps

☐ Common Academic Synonym Swaps

- ☐ "shows" → "indicates" / "demonstrates" (match to certainty level)

- ☐ "important" → "significant" / "critical" / "central"
- ☐ "a lot of" → "a substantial number of" / "numerous"
- ☐ "looks at" → "examines" / "investigates" / "analyses"
- ☐ "says" → "argues" / "states" / "notes" (match to source's actual stance)
- ☐ "big" → "substantial" / "considerable"
- ☐ "get" → "obtain" / "achieve" / "receive" (context-dependent)
- ☐ "leads to" → "results in" / "gives rise to"

Not sure if your paraphrasing is too close to the original? Our UK academic tutors can review your paraphrased work and referencing for you before submission.

Practice Exercises

☐ Exercise 1 — The memory test

- ☐ Read a short paragraph from a source once, then close it
- ☐ Write the idea from memory in your own words
- ☐ Compare your version against the original for close matches

☐ Exercise 2 — The technique combination drill

- ☐ Take one sentence and apply synonym substitution only
- ☐ Rewrite it again applying structural reordering as well

- ☐ Compare both versions — notice how much stronger the combined version reads

☐ Exercise 3 — The patchwriting spot-check

- ☐ Take a paraphrase you've already written for an assignment
- ☐ Highlight any phrase of three or more consecutive words matching the original
- ☐ Revise any matches you find using a different technique

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What is paraphrasing in academic writing?** Restating someone else's idea entirely in your own words and sentence structure, while still citing the original source.
- 2. Is paraphrasing without citation considered plagiarism?** Yes — paraphrasing still requires a citation, since the idea itself originates from another source.
- 3. What is patchwriting?** Changing only a few words of a sentence while keeping its original structure intact — considered a form of inadequate paraphrasing or plagiarism.
- 4. How is paraphrasing different from summarising?** Paraphrasing restates a specific idea at similar length and detail; summarising condenses a longer passage down to its key points.
- 5. Can I paraphrase a direct quotation instead of quoting it?** Yes, in most cases — direct quotation is generally reserved for cases where the original wording itself is significant.

- 6. Should I paraphrase technical or legal terms?** No — keep technical, legal, or clinically precise terms unchanged, but paraphrase the surrounding explanation.
- 7. How do I know if my paraphrase is too close to the original?** Compare it side-by-side with the source — if more than a short phrase matches word-for-word, or the structure is identical, revise further.
- 8. Are AI paraphrasing tools safe to use for university work?** Not necessarily — many institutions restrict their use, and AI-generated paraphrases can carry detection and accuracy risks. Always check your specific policy.
- 9. Do I need to cite a paraphrase even if I changed all the wording?** Yes — citation credits the origin of the idea, regardless of how thoroughly it has been reworded.
- 10. What's the safest way to paraphrase without risking plagiarism?** Read the source, set it aside, write the idea from memory in your own words, then compare and cite.
- 11. Can paraphrasing distort the original meaning?** Yes, if done carelessly — always check your paraphrase still accurately reflects the source's actual claim.
- 12. Is it acceptable to paraphrase a paraphrase from a secondary source?** It's better to locate and cite the original source directly where possible, to avoid compounding any inaccuracies.
- 13. How many paraphrasing techniques should I use per sentence?** Ideally more than one — combining techniques (e.g. synonym substitution and reordering) produces stronger, more genuinely original paraphrasing.
- 14. Why does looking at the source while writing cause problems?** It tends to make your sentence structure mirror the original too closely, even unintentionally.
- 15. Can Turnitin detect patchwriting?** Often, yes — similarity-detection software can flag sentences with matching structure even when individual words have been changed.

16. Is it plagiarism if I paraphrase my own previously submitted work? This can be considered self-plagiarism at many institutions — check your specific policy before reusing your own previous work.

17. How long should a paraphrase be compared to the original? Similar in length for a close paraphrase, though a free paraphrase or summary is often more concise than the source.

18. What should I do if I can't find a good synonym for a key term? Keep the original term if it's technical or has no true synonym, and cite the source clearly.

19. Is paraphrasing easier for some disciplines than others? Somewhat — sciences and law often require more caution due to precise terminology, while humanities allow more flexible paraphrasing.

20. Can I paraphrase an idea I don't fully understand? Not reliably — you risk misrepresenting the source; read it again until you understand it before attempting to paraphrase.

21. What's the difference between a close paraphrase and a free paraphrase? A close paraphrase stays similar in length and detail to the original; a free paraphrase restructures and condenses more significantly.

22. Do I need quotation marks if I only copy a few words exactly? Yes — even a short but distinctive phrase copied exactly should be placed in quotation marks or reworded further.

23. How can I paraphrase more efficiently under time pressure? Practise the read-then-write-from-memory process regularly so it becomes a quicker, more natural habit rather than a slow, deliberate task.

24. Should my paraphrase match the source's tone? Not necessarily — you can adapt tone and register to match your own essay's style, as long as the meaning stays accurate.

25. Is it acceptable to paraphrase statistics or numerical findings? Yes, but the actual figures themselves should remain accurate and unchanged — only the surrounding explanation should be paraphrased.

26. What happens if my paraphrasing is flagged as too similar during marking?

This can be treated as an academic integrity concern; many universities have a process for reviewing and responding to such flags — check your institution's procedure.

27. Can I use the same paraphrasing techniques across every discipline?

The four core techniques apply broadly, but caution around technical, legal, or clinical terminology varies meaningfully by discipline.

28. How do I paraphrase a source with a very distinctive writing style?

Focus on restating the underlying idea rather than trying to preserve the distinctive phrasing — the idea, not the style, is what you're crediting.

29. Is over-paraphrasing a real risk? Yes — paraphrasing so heavily that the original meaning is lost or distorted is a genuine risk, not just an efficiency issue.

30. Should I paraphrase every source I use in an assignment? Mostly yes, reserving direct quotation for cases where the exact original wording carries specific significance.

31. How is paraphrasing assessed differently from referencing accuracy?

Referencing accuracy checks citation format and completeness; paraphrasing quality checks how genuinely the ideas have been reworded in your own words.

32. Can I paraphrase visual data, like a graph or table, from a source? Yes — describe or reproduce the data in your own words or your own visual format, while citing the original source.

33. Is there a "safe percentage" of similarity to aim for? There's no universal number — similarity-detection reports should be read alongside human judgement about whether wording and structure are genuinely your own.

34. Do reflective or personal-voice assignments still require paraphrasing care? Yes — any time you draw on an external source's idea, even in a reflective piece, it still needs proper paraphrasing and citation.

35. What's the single most effective habit for better paraphrasing? Writing from memory after setting the source text aside — this one habit prevents the vast majority of accidental patchwriting.

Key Takeaways

- Paraphrasing means restating an idea entirely in your own words and structure, not just swapping a few words for synonyms.
 - Patchwriting — changing isolated words while keeping the original structure — is treated as a form of plagiarism at UK universities.
 - The four core techniques (synonym substitution, structural reordering, voice change, and combining/splitting sentences) are strongest when combined.
 - Reading the source, setting it aside, and writing from memory is the most reliable way to avoid accidentally mirroring the original.
 - Paraphrasing still requires citation — reworded ideas remain the intellectual property of their original source.
 - Technical, legal, and clinically precise terms are usually best kept unchanged, with the surrounding explanation paraphrased instead.
 - AI paraphrasing tools carry real institutional policy and detection risks — always check your university's specific rules before using one.
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Conclusion

Genuine paraphrasing is a skill built on understanding, not just vocabulary substitution: read the source until you truly grasp the idea, set it aside, and write it in your own words and structure from memory, then compare and cite. The most common mistake — patchwriting — comes from skipping the understanding step and reaching straight for a thesaurus. Practise the full read-understand-write-from-memory process consistently, and paraphrasing will become both faster and safer across every assignment you write.

Not sure if your paraphrasing is too close to the original? Our UK academic tutors can review your paraphrased work and referencing for you before submission.

This guide is provided for educational purposes to help UK university students develop and refine their own paraphrasing skills independently. AssignPro Solution offers tutoring, feedback, proofreading and referencing guidance only, and does not write or complete assignments on behalf of students.