

You can write a good paraphrase if you follow these steps.

- Step 1** Read the original passage several times until you understand it fully. Look up unfamiliar words, and find synonyms for them. It may not be possible to find synonyms for every word, especially technical vocabulary. In this case, use the original word.
- Step 2** It helps to take notes. Write down only a few words for each idea—not complete sentences. Here are one writer's notes on the original passage about universal language:

language—people use to communicate—but so many—difficult to understand one another—people wish—universal international language—reasons: cultural, economic bonds, better feelings between countries

It may be helpful to make a brief outline such as the following:

- A.** Language—people use to communicate
1. So many languages make it difficult to understand one another.
 2. People wish for one universal international language.
- B.** Reasons
1. Cultural, economic bonds
 2. Better feelings between countries
- Step 3** Write your paraphrase from your notes. Don't look at the original while you are writing.
- Step 4** Check your paraphrase against the original to make sure you have not copied vocabulary or the sentence structure too closely. Above all, make sure that you have not changed the meaning of the original or given any wrong information.
- Step 5** Add an in-text citation at the end.

Original Passage 3

Source: A Letter to the Editor written by Cory Brunish, which appeared on page 9 of the February 16, 2004, issue of *Time* magazine.

Why should we spend vast amounts to reach Mars when there is a very high chance of its not providing anything that would improve our lot here on Earth? Why not allocate those billions for "home improvement"? Think of the progress that could be made in curing cancer, AIDS, and other diseases; in cleaning our water, air, and soil; and in feeding hungry nations. Why confront the hazards of outer space when we should be fighting homelessness, poverty, and unemployment on Earth?

Notes

Your Paraphrase

Summarizing

Another way to use borrowed information from an outside source is to summarize it. What is the difference between a paraphrase and a summary? When you retell a story that someone has told you, you repeat the story in your own words. If your retelling is about the same length as the original, it is a paraphrase. If you shorten the story—retelling only the most important points and leaving out the details—it is a summary.

Original Passage (85 words)

Language is the main means of communication between peoples. But so many different languages have developed that language has often been a barrier rather than an aid to understanding among peoples. For many years, people have dreamed of setting up an international universal language which all people could speak and understand. The arguments in favor of a universal language are simple and obvious. If all peoples spoke the same tongue, cultural and economic ties might be much closer, and good will might increase between countries (Kispert).

Paraphrase (63 words, about the same length as the original)

Humans communicate through language. Because there are so many different languages, however, people around the world have a difficult time understanding one another. Some people have wished for a universal international language that speakers all over the world could understand. Their reasons are straightforward and clear. A universal language would build cultural and economic bonds. It would also create better feelings among countries (Kispert).

Summary (28 words, much shorter)

People communicate through language; however, having different languages creates communication barriers. A universal language could bring countries together culturally and economically as well as increase good feelings among them (Kispert).

Writing Technique Questions

1. How many sentences are there in the original passage? In the paraphrase? In the summary?
2. Compare the paraphrase and the summary. What two details were left out of the summary?

How to Write a Good Summary

There are three keys to writing a good summary:

1. Use your own words and your own sentence structure.
2. Remember that a summary is much shorter than a paraphrase. Include only the main points and main supporting points, leaving out most details.
3. Do not change the meaning of the original.

The End