ENGLISH FOR BIOLOGY

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PARAPHRASING
To paraphrase is to **rewrite** something using different words **without** changing the original meaning.

This is what is usually meant by the phrase ‘in your own words’. The paraphrase should be clearer and more easily understood than the original and is often about the same length.

Paraphrases are a good alternative to using direct quotations.
In your writing, you may make a paraphrase of:

- short sections of text (e.g. phrases, sentences)
- longer sections of text (e.g. a paragraph)
- information that explains tables or figures.
STEPS FOR PARAPHRASING

1. **Read the text carefully.** Underline, or note, any important subject-specific words.

2. Look up any **difficult words**, and try to find synonyms for them.

3. **Try to find different ways of expressing the information in the groups of words (phrases).**

4. Rewrite each sentence. Try to simplify the sentence structure and the vocabulary without changing the meaning.

5. **Put your text out of sight and write your paraphrase from memory.**

6. Revise what you have written, comparing it to the original. Your paraphrase should clarify the original, but be written clearly in your own words.

7. **Dont forget** to write the sources of your paraphrased sentences/ phrases/ paragraph
Eight Paraphrase Pitfalls

1. Misreading the original
2. Including too much of the original
3. Leaving out important information
4. Adding your opinion
5. Summarizing rather than paraphrasing
6. Substituting inappropriate synonyms
7. Expanding or narrowing the meaning
8. Forgetting to document
Here is a quick example of paraphrasing using a phrase from the paragraph above:

1. "Paraphrasing is a very important skill for most English tests."

2. "For many tests of English, being skilful at paraphrasing is extremely important."

Notice how the paraphrased version (sentence 2) changes some vocabulary (e.g., "extremely" for "very"), changes the word order (e.g., "tests of English" for "English tests") and changes the grammar (e.g., "being skilful at paraphrasing..." for "Paraphrasing is a very important skill...") These are the three main ways to paraphrase and by combining all of these methods, you can achieve clear and accurate paraphrased sentences. The next sections will look at these methods in more detail.
Paraphrasing Method 1: Use Different Vocabulary with the Same Meaning

Most students try to use this method, but actually it can be difficult to use. The reason is that although English has many synonyms such as ‘large’ or ‘big’, it is unusual for these words to have exactly the same meaning. So, if you try to use a lot of synonyms when you paraphrase, you might produce sentences that are not natural English. Unnatural sentences are likely to reduce your score more than small mistakes because the reader may not understand what you are trying to say.

For example, look at this original sentence and two paraphrased equivalents:

1. "It can be difficult to choose a suitable place to study English."
2. "It is often a challenge to pick up (x) a relevant (x) school to learn English."
3. "It is sometimes hard to select an appropriate place to learn English."
The best advice is to follow the “100% rule” for using synonyms: only use a synonym for a word if you are 100% certain that the new word has 100% the same meaning as the original word. If you are less than 100% certain, keep the same word and use either method two or method three to paraphrase your sentence.
Paraphrasing Method 2: Change the Order of Words

Changing the word order of a phrase or sentence is usually safer than using synonyms because the words are the same, so the meaning must be the same. However, it is not always easy to decide which words to move or to decide to which position the words should be moved. Also, when you move a word you might need to change some other words, add some other words or cut some other words to ensure that the new sentence is grammatically correct. Here are two suggestions for how to change the word order without making errors:
a. If the original sentence has two or more clauses, change the order of the **clauses**.

1. "If they have some help, most people can paraphrase effectively. However, practice is important because paraphrasing is difficult."

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2. "Most people can paraphrase effectively, if they have some help. Paraphrasing is difficult, however, so practice is important."

b. If the original sentence has an adjective and noun, change the adjective into a relative clause.

1. "Writing essays can be a **challenging** task."

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2. "Writing essays can be a task which is challenging."
Paraphrasing Method 3: Use Different Grammar

It sounds very difficult to use different grammar, but actually it is easier than changing vocabulary. In addition, if you change the grammar and make an error, usually the reader will understand what you mean. However, if you change the vocabulary and make an error, often the reader will not understand what you mean. So, although changing the grammar has some advantages, it is still not easy and you should practice it as often as possible. Here are two suggestions for how to change the grammar without making errors:
a. Change some of the words in the original sentence into different parts of speech (you will often need to change the word order and some other words, too).

1. "The most effective way to build your English skill is to study regularly."

2. "The most effective way of building your English skill is to do studying on a regular basis."

b. If the original sentence is in the active voice, change it to passive or vice versa.

1. "To improve English, you should learn new vocabulary on a daily basis."

2. "To improve English, new vocabulary should be learned on a daily basis."
ASSESS YOUR PARAPHRASE

- The MEANING is the same.
- Most of the words have been changed.
- The sentences have been significantly restructured.
- This is about the same length as the original writing.
- The information is correctly referenced.