

⑧ Rather than focusing on protecting drivers in an accident, research should be directed more towards systems that actively support drivers in their driving task so that they do not get into accidents in the first place. ⑨ This is a radical change from the focus on passive safety systems, which do nothing to help prevent drivers from getting into an accident (Mulder et al., 2011).

This is perhaps a reasonable beginning. The writer has retained the important parts of the text. However, this summary has some weaknesses.

1. For the most part, too much of the text is written in the words of the original, although no whole sections were borrowed. It may very well be an example of plagiarism—work copied from a source without proper attribution. Notice, for instance, that much of Sentence 1 is very close to the beginning of the source and throughout several stretches of language from the source have been copied.
2. The draft does not display a high level of understanding of the source passage. While it does show that the writer can pull out important information, it may not convince the reader that the summary writer understands the issues and need for research.

Overall, although this response is a reasonable draft, it needs more work before it would be fully acceptable as a written assignment. Now, let us consider how the summary could be improved. One obvious approach would be to paraphrase the sentences of the original.

Paraphrasing

A paraphrase is a restatement (in your own words) of the ideas in the original. Good paraphrasing can demonstrate that you have understood the text you have read and can avoid plagiarizing. The most common strategy used to accomplish this involves replacing words in the source with synonyms and perhaps changing the grammar. Look again at Sentence 3 from the text on new car safety systems.

. . . nondriving-related devices, such as car stereos, mobile phones, and, more recently, navigation systems, divert drivers' attention increasingly more away from the primary sources of information necessary for safe operation of the vehicle: the road and other road users.

If you want to use this information but write it in your own words, you could begin by identifying the important information in the sentence and the relationships between points. You then might think about language to establish relationships, as demonstrated here.

Important points

- There are a lot of devices in cars that have nothing to do with operating a vehicle.
- These devices can distract drivers.
- Drivers are so distracted that they may not pay attention to the road and other drivers.

Important relationships

- cause and effect

Linking phrases and expressions that can connect the two points

- *because*
- *therefore*
- *as a result*

Verbs that might establish other relationships

- *is due to*
- *caused by*
- *can be attributed to*
- *leading to*

Next you might consider possible synonyms for the source vocabulary and changing the part of speech (nouns to verbs, for instance).

- *such as* → *like, including*
- *more recently* → *lately?*
- *devices* → *technology*
- *divert* → *distract, sidetrack, take away, diversion*
- *non-driving* → ?
- *primary sources* → *main inputs?*
- *necessary* → *needed, required*
- *safe* → *secure?*

Other considerations

- Is this always true? Should the claim be softened?

Finally, you are ready to try your own paraphrase.

TASK FIVE

Re-write the excerpt at the bottom of page 202 using *because* and *lead to*, changing the vocabulary and grammar as necessary. Here are two examples using *due to*.

Example: due to

Safe driving practices may be compromised *due to* the presence of technology in cars that is not directly related to vehicle operation including cell phones, music players, and GPS.

Drivers today may fail to concentrate on the road and other drivers *due to* the presence of technology such as cell phones, music players, GPS, and other technology that is unrelated to driving.

1. Use *because*

2. Use *lead to*

3. Write two paraphrases of this short text. Before writing, break the task into important points, relationships, linking phrases and connectors, and synonyms.

Passive safety systems help lessen the impact of driving accidents. They do nothing to contribute to preventing drivers from getting into an accident.

Important points

Relationship between the points

Linking phrases or expressions to connect the points

Possible synonyms

Paraphrase 1

Paraphrase 2

As the task suggests, paraphrasing is hard work, particularly when it comes to vocabulary.

Careful Use of Synonyms

When using synonyms, you need to be careful about your choices. Not all synonyms work equally well in all contexts. Take this example, for instance.

The system is intended to provide continuous car-following support within a wide range of car-following situations—not only in critical situations.

If you follow a simple synonym substitution process, you may produce something like this.

In many kinds of car-following situations—not only in grave situations—the system is planned to present persistent car-following support.

The rearrangement of the ideas is good and is an important strategy for paraphrasing. However, *grave* and *critical* are not quite similar enough in this context. Perhaps *dangerous* would be a better choice here. In addition, *present persistent car-following support* does not work so well because the collocation (simply put, words that tend to go together) is awkward. *Offer* might be a better choice.

If you need to check whether the words you want to use go together, you can search the internet, ideally Google Scholar. To conduct your search, place the expression of interest in quotation marks and, if you think it would be helpful, use a wild card indicated by an asterisk (*) in the expression so that you can capture variations of the expression. For instance, we did this search on Google Scholar. To narrow hits to your field of study, include a relevant term outside the quotation marks.

“the system is * to * support”

We found these interesting possibilities.

| | | | |
|------------|---------------|------------|---------|
| The system | is designed | to provide | support |
| | is configured | to deliver | |
| | is built | | |
| | is intended | | |
| | is expected | | |
| | is developed | | |
| | is able | | |
| | is placed | | |

We even found many instances of useful modification and split infinitives.

| | | | |
|------------|---------------|------------------|---------|
| The system | is designed | to fully | support |
| | is configured | to directly | |
| | is built | to unobtrusively | |
| | is intended | to optionally | |
| | is expected | | |
| | is developed | | |
| | is able | | |
| | is placed | | |

So, we can write something like this.

The system is configured to provide ongoing car-following support in many types of situations, not only those that are identified as dangerous.

Note that the language has been substantially changed, although the sense of the original is fully maintained. A paraphrase approach to summarizing can be somewhat successful, but if you do this sentence by sentence for a longer stretch of text, you run the risk of not demonstrating your full understanding of the passage. You might miss an opportunity to highlight key points. Another possible danger is that the resulting summary may not be original enough and could be considered plagiarism by some.

If you (understandably) feel that your paraphrasing ability is not strong, you can copy some material and place it in quotation marks; however, a better but more difficult strategy would be to carefully consider the elements you have identified as important, put the original away, and write what you have understood. This may allow you to condense the ideas in the source even further.

To sum up, when you write a formal summary of someone else's ideas, you should keep in mind the following guidelines.

1. Always try to use your own words.
2. Include enough support and detail so that your message is clear.
3. Do not try to paraphrase specialized vocabulary or technical terms.
4. Make sure the summary reads smoothly. Focus on old-to-new information flow; use transition devices where necessary; and provide supporting detail. You do not want a collection of sentences that does not flow.
5. If it is impossible to use your own words, then quote the material. Remember, however, that too much quoting will not likely result in a successful paper. Information from sources should *support, but not replace*, your own ideas, interpretations, and explanations.

TASK SIX

Here is a second draft of the response to whether there is a need for a shift in the focus of research on car safety systems. Read it and answer the questions on page 209.

① Over the past five decades there has been a dramatic improvement in the risks associated with driving. ② During this time, deaths resulting from driving accidents have decreased nearly fourfold (Mulder et al., 2011). ③ Much of this improvement has to do with appropriate safety regulations and equipment in vehicles designed to protect drivers and their passengers (e.g., safety belts, air bags, and other passive safety mechanisms) (Mulder et al., 2011). ④ This improvement, however, may begin to diminish as drivers face new risks related to the availability of technology that is not needed for vehicle operation, but does reduce drivers' attention to their task. ⑤ This, of course, includes a variety of devices such as music systems, mobile phones, and even GPS, all of which, but particularly mobile phones, have been shown to have an impact on safe driving.

⑥ While previous safety measures were targeted at protection and have been highly successful, it seems now that driver distraction needs to be addressed if the gains in safety are to be maintained or enhanced. ⑦ Thus, there is a need to shift the focus of safety research to help drivers themselves be more aware of their surroundings during the operation of their vehicles. ⑧ For instance, drivers may not be aware that they are following a car too closely and be unable to stop safely. ⑨ If a car-following alert system (Mulder et al., 2011) could be devised to warn drivers of the potential danger, accidents could be prevented.

1. Does the response answer the question?
 2. Does the response capture good supportive information from the source? Does the source information serve as support or does it seem to be the focus?
 3. To what extent has the author of the draft used his/her own words?
 4. How well has the draft author revealed his/her understanding of the problem and solution?
 5. Can you identify any instances of evaluation and where the author has incorporated some ideas not found in the source? Are these appropriate?
 6. If you were to revise the draft, what would you do?
 7. Write your own response to the question using the source text.
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Since many of the summaries you write will be woven into your own original text, it is very important to identify at least the source author, depending on your field of study.

Note that when your citation style requires the use of author names, you need to provide the family name. First names only are not used in in-text citations since this makes it difficult for your reader to know to whom you might be referring. One of our students chose to identify the source of the vehicle safety text in this way.

According to Mark and his co-authors, car safety research should be directed at preventing accidents.