Target Band 7+

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IELTS Writing

How to Paraphrase Sentences

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How to Paraphrase in the IELTS Test

Paraphrasing is simply re-writing a phrase or sentence so that it has the same meaning, but with different words. Paraphrasing is one of the most important skills to learn before doing your IELTS test. It is most important for writing and speaking, but will also help you in the reading and listening tests. In other words, if you know how to paraphrase you are more likely to get the score you need.

The mental processes required to paraphrase will also help you to fully understand the question and this is one of the reasons I tell my students to begin all of their answers in the writing test by paraphrasing the question.

Let's look at an example.

Example: **Paraphrasing is one of the most important skills to learn before doing your IELTS test.**

Paraphrased: **Prior to taking the IELTS test, mastering paraphrasing is one of the most crucial things to do.**

As you can see, the second sentence (paraphrased sentence) uses synonyms to change some vocabulary (e.g., 'important' for 'crucial' and ''prior'' to 'before' and changes the grammar (e.g., Paraphrasing is one of the most important skills" for "mastering paraphrasing"). You can also change the word order.

These are the three main methods you should use in the IELTS test to paraphrase sentences. Ideally, you should try to use all three but sometimes two will only be possible.

We will now look at each method in detail and also have a look at the passive.

Method Number 1: Using Synonyms

Synonyms are different words that have the same meaning. For example, 'humans' is a synonym of 'people' and 'attractive' is a synonym of 'beautiful'. This method simply replaces words with the same meaning in order to produce a new sentence.

For example:

My car needs petrol.

My vehicle requires fuel.

As you can see, I have replaced 3 out of four words with synonyms to produce a new sentence, with the same meaning as the first one. You will notice that I didn't replace all of the words, but you should try to replace most of them.

This is the most common method that students use and it can be used effectively, but you should be careful. The biggest mistake students make is trying to paraphrase and the word having a**similar** meaning, but not the **same** meaning. Similar meanings are not good enough and will lose you marks. Let's look at some examples of poor paraphrasing because of using similar instead of the same meanings.

Violent crime is on the rise among <u>teenagers</u>.

Violent offences are rising among <u>young people</u>.

This student has changed the word 'teenagers' for 'young people'. They are similar words and teenagers are of course young people; however children and young adults, aged between 18-30, could also be described as young people. A

more term would be ‘adolescents’ or ‘young people between the ages of 13-19.’ A better way to paraphrase this sentence would therefore be:

Violent offences are rising among <u>adolescents.</u>

You should therefore only use words you are 100% sure about. Don’t change a word unless you are 100% sure that it is a direct synonym, otherwise you are likely to make mistakes and this will bring down your score.

Let’s look at another good example:

Global warming is mostly caused by emissions from internal combustion engines.

Climate change is mainly caused by the release of fumes from motor vehicles.

Method Number 2: Change the Word Order

Changing the word order also allows us to effectively paraphrase a sentence, but again, we have to be careful. Don’t change the word order without thinking about how this affects the grammar of the sentence. By changing the word order you may have to add a word, subtract a word or change the form of the word.

The 100% rule applies again; don’t change it if you are not 100% sure it is grammatically correct. Remember that you are being judged on your ability to produce error free sentences in the IELTS test as well as use a range of grammar structures.

Fortunately, there are two straightforward ways we can change the word order in most IELTS questions.

1. You can easily change the order of the clauses, if the original sentence has more than one clause.

Question: **As languages such as Spanish, Chinese and English become more widely used, there is a fear that that many minority languages may die out.**

Paraphrased by changing word order: **There is a fear that many minority languages may die out, as languages such as Spanish, Chinese and English become more widely used.**

We could also add some synonyms to paraphrase it even more:

Paraphrased with changing word order **AND** synonyms: **There is dismay that many lesser used languages may pass away, as languages such as Chinese, English and Spanish become more broadly spoken.**

2. You can also change the word order if there is an adjective or noun in the question. You do this by simply changing the adjective into a relative clause.

Question: **Learning to manage money is one of the key aspects to adult life.**

Paraphrased using a relative clause: **Learning to manage money is one of the aspects to adult life that is key.**

Method Number 3: Change the Form of the Word

There are many different forms of words including nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Changing the form of a word allows us to paraphrase effectively. Again, don't just change the form of the word; you also need to check that your changes make grammatical sense. You might need to change the words around it to make the sentence error free.

Question: **Longer life spans and improvements in the health of older people suggest that people over the age of sixty-five can continue to live full and active lives.**

Paraphrased by changing word form: **Longer life spans and improvements in the health of older people are suggesting that people over the age of sixty-five can continue living full and active lives.**

Method Number 4: Change from Active to Passive

The passive voice is often used in academic writing and can therefore be used in the IELTS academic writing test. Only verbs with an object can be turned into the passive.

Example active sentence: **The property developers invested $20 million in the development of the shopping centre.**

Example passive sentence: **$20 million was invested in the development of shopping centres.**

We often use the passive voice in academic writing when we don't want to say it is our opinion.

Example active: **People say that global warming is caused by the burning of fossil fuels.**

Example passive: **Global warming is said to be caused by the burning of fossil fuels.**

How many of these methods should I use?

The four methods can be used independently or together. I advise my students to try and change the grammar (word order and/or word form) and use synonyms. Remember only use the methods you feel 100% comfortable using and that you are sure your work is error free.

Next Steps

These paraphrasing methods will only help you in the IELTS exam if you practice using them. Find some example writing questions and try paraphrasing them using these methods. You can use the methods individually and then combine them. Try all of them to see what works for you. If you practice enough you will begin to see patterns in the questions and common words and phrases will become easy for you to change.

If you want to see examples of paraphrasing simply use Google. If you Google certain keywords, lots of articles will come up on the same topic. By comparing these you will be able to see how different writers have expressed the same ideas.



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