



Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing, that is, being able to present the ideas and information that you read in your own words, is an important skill in your university studies.

Being able to express the ideas and information that you read is important because it shows that you have understood the ideas. To be able to paraphrase well does not mean that you can express the ideas you have read in an elaborate way. It means that you can express them in the language that is natural to you.

It is sometimes suggested that students approach paraphrasing by changing a few words in a sentence and/or turning sentences around. So the sentence:

Strategic management is the process where managers develop and implement strategies for achieving strategic goals, within existing conditions.

might be turned around to:

The process where managers develop and implement strategies for achieving strategic goals is called strategic management.

This method and the word changing method can become a problem as they can easily lead to plagiarism in the sense of too close a copying of the original author's way of expressing their idea.

Paraphrasing – an example

To prevent this it is most useful to approach paraphrasing at the paragraph level that is, paraphrasing whole paragraphs rather than individual sentences, as in the above example. Paragraphs are 'idea units' where writers introduce, develop and conclude one idea and then signal, by beginning a new paragraph that they are moving onto the next idea. So by paraphrasing at paragraph level you can identify the writer's ideas. This is also a more time efficient way of paraphrasing and taking notes from your reading.

This method will be demonstrated by using an example. The following three paragraphs are taken from the book, Bartol, K, Tein, M, Matthews, G and Martin, D 2003, *Management – A Pacific Rim Focus*, McGraw Hill, Australia.

THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Most well-run organisations try to develop and follow strategies, which are large-scale action plans for interacting with the environment to achieve long-term goals (Jauch & Glueck 1988; Pearce & Robinson 1988). An organisation's strategic plan is a statement of its strategies, mission and goals (Thompson & Strickland 1992). To learn where these come from and how they are put into action, we must examine the aspect of planning called strategic management. Strategic management is the process where managers develop and implement strategies for achieving strategic goals, within existing conditions (Thompson & Strickland 1992; Rue & Holland 1989). This recognises that strategic management is oriented toward achieving long term goals, weighs important environmental elements, considers major internal organisation characteristics, and involves specific strategy development. Thus the strategic management process is a major part of the planning process introduced in Chapter 5.

The strategic management process

The strategic management process comprises several major components, as shown in Figure 7 1. It begins with identifying an organisation's mission and strategic goals (see Chapter 6). Next, it involves competitive situation analysis, considering both external environment and organisational factors. After this analysis, managers develop, or formulate, strategies to reach strategic goals. The process of identifying the mission and strategic goals, conducting competitive analysis, and developing specific strategies is strategy formulation. In contrast the process of carrying out strategic plans and controlling how they are carried is strategy implementation (Thompson & Strickland 1992). Distinguishing strategy implementation is increasingly important in strategic management because even brilliantly formulated strategies will not succeed if they are implemented ineffectively.

Importance of strategic management

Strategic management is important for many reasons (Thompson & Strickland 1992). For one, the process helps organisations identify and develop a competitive advantage, or a significant edge over competition in dealing with competitive forces (Porter 1985).

Strategic management is also important because it provides direction so organisation members know where to expend their efforts. Without a strategic plan, managers may concentrate on day-to-day activities, only to find that a competitor has achieved a more favourable position by taking a longer-term view of strategic directions.

Strategic management can also show a need for innovation, providing an organised approach for encouraging new ideas related to strategies (Schilit 1987). In addition, the process can involve managers at various levels in planning making it more likely they will understand the resulting plans and be committed to them.

Paraphrasing – the process

The first step is to take the writers' organisation of their ideas, as shown by the headings they have used, and turn these into questions such as:

- **What** is the concept of strategic management?
- **What** is the strategic management process?
- **What** is the importance of strategic management?

The next step is to read the paragraphs one at a time with the heading question in mind, highlighting the main words or phrases and answering the question in as few words as possible. For the first paragraph question (What is the concept of strategic management?) you might respond:

- a planning process
- achieves long term goals
- is based on existing environmental and organizational circumstances.

For the second paragraph question (What is the strategic management process?) you might respond:

- has 2 phases
- phases are devising strategy and implementing strategy.

For the third paragraph question (What is the importance of strategic management?) you might respond:

- aids in the identification of competitive edge
- focuses on efforts beyond the short term
- shows where new ideas are needed and begin to develop them.

The final step is to take your dot point responses and turn them into sentences. So your paraphrase of these three paragraphs might read:

Example 1

Strategic management is a planning process which allows an organization to develop and work towards long term goals. It includes two phases: the devising of a strategy and its implementation. Through strategic management competitive advantage can be enhanced, long term goals identified and new ideas encouraged (Bartol et al, 2003).

Example 2

Bartol et al (2003) describe strategic management as a planning process which allows an organization to develop and work towards long term goals. They identify two phases in strategic management, the devising of a strategy and its implementation. For them strategic management allows competitive advantage to be enhanced, long term goals to be identified and new ideas to be encouraged.

The first example presents the ideas in a way that emphasises the ideas while still showing where it is taken from with an in-text reference. The second example presents the ideas in a way that emphasises whose ideas these are.