

How to paraphrase and summarise in your own words

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Paraphrasing - when you wish to refer to sentences or phrases in the source text. Particularly useful when dealing with facts and definitions, paraphrasing involves rewriting a short section from the source text in different words whilst keeping the same meaning

Summarising - when you wish to refer to ideas contained in a long text. Reduces the author's ideas to key points in an outline of the discussion omitting unnecessary details and examples. Whether you summarise or paraphrase, you will still need to include a reference citing the source of the ideas you have referred to.

Here's an example of summarising to show how it's done:

Original passage

*Trevor Philips today announces the launch of an independent inquiry into **human rights in Britain**. The inquiry will be chaired by **Dame Nuala O'Loan**, the former Northern Ireland Police Ombudsman who led the investigation into the Omagh bombings. Trevor Phillips said that the inquiry will be '**a full, frank and most importantly independent appraisal**' of how human rights works in Britain.*

*The announcement comes as Britain approaches the 10th anniversary of the passing of the **Human Rights Act** and the 60th anniversary of the **UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights**.*

*Yet despite human rights featuring in British law for nearly a decade, a **GfK NOP poll** for the Commission showed that the term 'human rights' still prompts blank or mixed reactions from a large proportion of the British public.*

*According to the poll, **40%** have either not heard the phrase 'human rights', are unable to name any of the protected rights or don't know if they support the legislation. Nevertheless, **47%** supported 'human rights' laws in Britain." (*Issues Online, 2008*)*

Summary

- Oct 2008: Trevor Phillips announces independent inquiry into GB human rights chaired by Dame Nuala O'Loan. Full, frank, independent.
- GB approaching 10th anniversary of the Human Rights Act and 60th anniversary of UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- GfK NOP poll for Commission for Equality & Human Rights: (1) 40% haven't heard the phrase 'human rights'; unable to name any protected rights; don't know if they support the legislation. (2) 47% support 'human rights' laws in GB.

The summary works out to be around a third of the original passage. Key people and legislation are included whilst any additional unnecessary details are excluded. Results from the opinion poll provide the main piece of evidence to support the author's report on the attitudes of British people towards human rights. The summary gets over the essential facts and figures. It's not a personal interpretation or opinion.

Bold font has been used, to show the legislation passed and the results of the opinion poll that would need to be referenced in order to include this information in an assignment.

Now try summarising this piece of text

Original passage

A minimum income standard for the UK in 2013

What income do people need to achieve a socially acceptable standard of living in 2013?

This year's updated figures show a continuing squeeze on incomes relative to rising costs, only partly alleviated by increased tax allowances.

Updated annually, MIS shows us the cost of items and activities the public think we all need for a decent standard of living. It also calculates the earnings required to enable different household types to achieve this living standard.

Single people need to earn at least £16,850 a year before tax in 2013 for a minimum acceptable living standard. Couples with two children need to earn at least £19,400 each.

The cost of the 'minimum' household budget of goods and services required for a decent standard of living is rising faster than the official rate of inflation.

Over the past five years, working-age benefits have deteriorated substantially relative to MIS. Out-of-work benefits remain well below MIS, but pensioners claiming Pension Credit receive incomes close to minimum requirements.

The jump in the personal tax allowance in April 2013 has slightly eased cost-of-living squeeze for those earning enough to claim it. But the benefits have been outweighed by cuts to tax credits and the rising cost of essentials.

Families with children are particularly feeling the squeeze. Earnings needed to make ends meet have risen by over 5 per cent, at a time when average earnings have been flat.

Extract from: Hirsh, D. (2013) A minimum income standard for the UK in 2013. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Available from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/MIS-2013>

Summary