

Ventura College  
Directed Learning Activity (Writing)  
Designed by: Sumita Lall

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of Session: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tutor/Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Paraphrasing Main Ideas and Summarizing Paragraphs
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**SLO:** Students will be able to **paraphrase** topic sentences and supporting details in a **summary** of a paragraph.

**Objective:** Restating a writer's topic sentence and main supporting details in your own words is a useful way to comprehend and report information.

When you **paraphrase**, you are focusing on a writer's meaning and using your own words to rewrite or change the original words to represent the author's meaning as accurately as possible. While maintaining the length of the original topic sentence and main supporting details, you must also avoid changing the meaning of the writer's paragraph. When you **summarize**, you are reporting what you think are the main ideas of a paragraph to a reader (i.e. topic sentences and main supporting details) and giving credit to the author, selecting only those points you consider important to the meaning of the original paragraph.

**Activity:** (25 min)

The following steps of the exercise require interaction with and modeling by a tutor or instructor.

1.) Read your choice of **one** paragraph (to a tutor/instructor or on your own) from the examples attached to this worksheet (see the attached page titled "Sample Paragraphs"). The tutor/instructor will read the same paragraph.

2.) Using a dictionary, define any unknown words. Also, try to find words that you can replace with other words that express the same meaning (i.e. synonyms). Your job is to make the meaning of the paragraph easier to understand.

3.) Paraphrase (i.e. state in your own words) the paragraph's **topic sentence** and **main supporting details** to the tutor/instructor working with you. If further instruction is needed at this step, refer to the DLA (Reading) on "Identifying Topics in Textbook Paragraphs."

4.) The tutor/instructor working with you will now pick up an imaginary phone and report to a friend what he/she has just learned about the

topic covered in the paragraph. **Notice how the tutor started with the words, “I just read an interesting paragraph by xx called “yy” about . . .,”** and notice, too, that **he/she is not following the same word order** as the original paragraph you have chosen together, instead working from memory when stating the logical flow between ideas and combining any repeated or related ideas.

5.) With the tutor/instructor working with you, review the “Writing a Summary” **PowerPoint**, paying close attention to the important steps of what information to include (mention the author or source). Ask any questions if you are confused.

**Assignment:** (30 min)

The following steps of the exercise require students to work independently.

1.) Read your choice of **one more** paragraph from the examples attached to this worksheet (see “Sample Paragraphs” on the last page).

2.) Using a dictionary, define any unknown words. Also, try to find words that you can replace with other words that express the same meaning (i.e. synonyms). Your job is to make the meaning of the paragraph easier to understand.

3.) In the spaces below, write down the title and author of your chosen paragraph. In the next spaces, **paraphrase** the paragraph’s **topic sentence** and **main supporting details** (i.e. state the meaning of these sentences using your own words and keeping the original length).

Title: _____ Author: _____
Topic Sentence:
Main Supporting Details:

4.) Now, pretend you are picking up a phone and reporting to a friend what you have just learned about the topic covered in the paragraph. **Try starting with the words, “I just read an interesting paragraph by xx called “yy” about . . .,”** and try **not to follow the same word order** as the original paragraph you have chosen, instead working from memory when stating the logical flow between ideas and combining any repeated or related ideas.

5.) In the space below, write down what you have just imagined reporting to a friend over the phone.

Summary of “\_\_\_\_\_” (insert title):

6.) Review the “Writing a Summary” **PowerPoint**, paying close attention to the important steps of what information to include (mention the author or source). Using a different colored pen or pencil, insert any information or ideas that are missing from your summary and fix any errors you notice while revising.

**Review:** (10 min)

The following steps of the exercise require interaction with a tutor or instructor.

- 1.) Explain what you learned about **paraphrasing** and **writing a summary** to the tutor/instructor working with you.
- 2.) How might you apply what you have learned in your classes at Ventura College?

Tutor/Instructor Feedback and Reflection:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Student seemed engaged during “Activity.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student seemed engaged during “Assignment.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student completed the DLA.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student included appropriate main ideas and supporting details.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Summary was in the student’s own words.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student worked well independently.

Space for notes by tutor/instructor:

Sample Paragraphs

- 1.) “The term **learning style** refers to the preferred way that you acquire, process, and retain information – the way you learn best. We learn new tasks in different ways; we each have our own style or preference for learning. The time of day you study, the kinds of strategies you use, whether you work alone or with a group, and even the place you study are all aspects of your learning style” (Van Blerkom 9).

This paragraph was taken from Dianna L. Van Blerkom’s textbook *College Study Skills: Becoming a Strategic Learner* (Wadsworth, 2009)

- 2.) “One of the hardest parts of setting goals is maintaining the momentum to achieve them. There will be times in your academic career when you will feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities you have, and you will feel unsure of your ability to handle it all. When you feel weighted down by all that you have to accomplish for a particular week or day, try to calm down first. If you can, talk with a friend, an instructor, or a counselor and explain your frustration and stress. Sometimes, if an instructor knows you are feeling overwhelmed by expectations in a course, he or she will assist you by giving you more time to complete an assignment. A friend may also volunteer to help by studying with you.” (Amy Baldwin 35)

This paragraph was taken from Amy Baldwin’s *The Community College Experience, Plus* (Prentice Hall, 2010)