



# WRITING CENTRE

## CHANGE A WORD FROM ONE PART OF SPEECH TO ANOTHER

**Original:** Medical professor John Swanson says that global changes are influencing the spread of disease.

**Paraphrase:** According to John Swanson, a professor of medicine, changes across the globe are causing diseases to spread (James, 2004).

## USE SYNONYMS

**Original:** The U.S. government declared that the AIDS crisis poses a national security threat. The announcement followed an intelligence report that found high rates of HIV infection could lead to widespread political destabilization.

**Paraphrase:** The government of the United States announced that AIDS could harm the nation's security. The government warned the population after an important governmental study concluded that political problems could result from large numbers of people infected with HIV (Snell, 2005).

## CHANGE NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES TO DIFFERENT FORMS

**Original:** Minority groups in the United States have been hit hardest by the epidemic. African Americans, who make up 13 percent of the U.S. population, accounted for 46 percent of the AIDS cases diagnosed in 1998.

**Paraphrase:** The AIDS epidemic has mostly affected minorities in the United States. For example, in 1998, less than 15 percent of the total population was African, but almost half of the people diagnosed with AIDS in the United States that year were African America (Jenson, 2000).

## CHANGE WORD ORDER (e.g., change from active to passive voice and move modifiers to different positions)

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The passive voice is generally used in academic writing when the agent is unknown or redundant, should be concealed, introduces new information (thematic) or to provide objectivity (i.e., scientific voice).

**Original:** Angier (2001) reported that malaria kills more than one million people annually, the overwhelming majority of them children in sub-Saharan Africa.

**Paraphrase:** Every year, more than a million people are killed by malaria, and most of the victims are children who live in sub-Saharan Africa (Angier, 2001).

## USE DIFFERENT DEFINITION STRUCTURES

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**Original:** Lyme disease is an inflammatory disease caused by a bacterium transmitted by ticks (small bloodsucking arachnids that attach themselves to larger animals). The disease is usually characterized by a rash followed by flu-like symptoms, including fever, joint pain, and headache.

**Paraphrase:** Lyme disease is a disease that causes swelling and redness is caused by a bacterium carried by a small arachnid known as a tick. The ticks attach to and suck the blood of animals and humans, transferring some of the Lyme disease bacteria into their hosts and causing symptoms similar to the flu (Wald, 2005).

## USE DIFFERENT ATTRIBUTION SIGNALS

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**Original:** “That’s because there are so many different ways the diseases could have arrived,” veterinarian Mark Walters declared in his recent book, *Six Modern Plagues*.

**Paraphrase:** According to Mark Walters, a veterinarian who wrote *Six Modern Plagues*, the disease could have arrived in numerous ways (Peterson, 2004).

## CHANGE THE SENTENCE STRUCTURE, AND USE DIFFERENT CONNECTING WORDS

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**Original:** Although only about one-tenth of the world's population lives there, sub-Saharan Africa remains the hardest hit region, accounting for 72 percent of the people infected with HIV during 2000.

**Paraphrase:** Approximately 10 percent of the world's population resides in sub-Saharan Africa. However, this area of the world has the highest percentage of AIDS-related illnesses. In fact, in 2000, almost three-fourths of the population had the HIV virus (Bunting, 2004).

## DO NOT CHANGE KEY TERMS OR PROPER NOUNS

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**Original:** In the northeastern United States, people are building homes on the edge of woods, where ticks that carry Lyme disease hitch rides on deer. In addition, in Africa, hunters bring back the meat of animals that scientists think may transmit Ebola, a usually fatal disease that causes massive hemorrhaging in its victims.

**Paraphrase:** In the United States, residential areas are being built near wooded areas in the northeast. These areas are also the homes of ticks carrying Lyme disease. Also, according to scientists, hunters in Africa kill animals that may carry the Ebola virus (an often fatal virus that causes massive hemorrhaging) (Yaya, 2004).

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### NOTE:

In every discipline and in certain genres (such as the empirical research report), **some phrases** are so specialized or conventional that you can't paraphrase them without being wordy and awkward. When you repeat such phrases, you're not stealing the unique phrasing of an individual writer but using a common vocabulary shared by a community of scholars.

**Conventional designations:** e.g., physician's assistant, chronic low-back pain

**Preferred bias-free language:** e.g., persons with disabilities

**Technical terms and phrases of a discipline or genre:** e.g., reduplication, cognitive domain, material culture, sexual harassment

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## ORIGINALS

- <sup>1</sup>. “The Antarctic is the vast source of cold on our planet, just as the sun is the source of our heat, and it exerts tremendous control on our climate,” [Jacques] Cousteau told the camera. “The cold ocean water around Antarctica flows north to mix with warmer water from the tropics, and its upwellings help to cool both the surface water and our atmosphere. Yet the fragility of this regulating system is now threatened by human activity.” From “Captain Cousteau,” Audubon (May 1990): 17.
  - <sup>2</sup>. The twenties were the years when drinking was against the law, and the law was a bad joke because everyone knew of a local bar where liquor could be had. They were the years when organized crime ruled the cities, and the police seemed powerless to do anything against it. Classical music was forgotten while jazz spread throughout the land, and men like Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie became the heroes of the young. The flapper was born in the twenties, and with her bobbed hair and short skirts, she symbolized, perhaps more than anyone or anything else, America’s break with the past. From Kathleen Yancey, English 102 Supplemental Guide (1989): 25.
  - <sup>3</sup>. Of the more than 1000 bicycling deaths each year, three-fourths are caused by head injuries. Half of those killed are school-age children. One study concluded that wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent. In an accident, a bike helmet absorbs the shock and cushions the head. From “Bike Helmets: Unused Lifesavers,” Consumer Reports (May 1990): 348.
  - <sup>4</sup>. Matisse is the best painter ever at putting the viewer at the scene. He’s the most realistic of all modern artists, if you admit the feel of the breeze as necessary to a landscape and the smell of oranges as essential to a still life. “The Casbah Gate” depicts the well-known gateway Bab el Aassa, which pierces the southern wall of the city near the sultan’s palace. With scrubby coats of ivory, aqua, blue, and rose delicately fenced by the liveliest gray outline in art history, Matisse gets the essence of a Tangier afternoon, including the subtle presence of the bowaab, the sentry who sits and surveys those who pass through the gate. From Peter Plagens, “Bright Lights.” Newsweek (26 March 1990): 50.
  - <sup>5</sup>. While the Sears Tower is arguably the greatest achievement in skyscraper engineering so far, it’s unlikely that architects and engineers have abandoned the quest for the world’s tallest building. The question is: Just how high can a building go? Structural engineer William LeMessurier has designed a skyscraper nearly one-half mile high, twice as tall as the Sears Tower. And architect Robert Sobel claims that existing technology could produce a 500-story building. From Ron Bachman, “Reaching for the Sky.” Dial (May 1990): 15.
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## PARAPHRASED

**(Compare these to the originals and identify the techniques used to paraphrase.)**

- <sup>1</sup> According to Jacques Cousteau, the activity of people in Antarctica is jeopardizing a delicate natural mechanism that controls the earth's climate. He fears that human activity could interfere with the balance between the sun, the source of the earth's heat, and the important source of cold from Antarctic waters that flow north and cool the oceans and atmosphere ("Captain Cousteau" 17).
  - <sup>2</sup> During the twenties lawlessness and social nonconformity prevailed. In cities organized crime flourished without police interference, and in spite of nationwide prohibition of liquor sales, anyone who wished to buy a drink knew where to get one. Musicians like Louis Armstrong become favorites, particularly among young people, as many turned away from highly respectable classical music to jazz. One of the best examples of the anti-traditional trend was the proliferation of young "flappers," women who rebelled against custom by cutting off their hair and shortening their skirts (Yancey 25).
  - <sup>3</sup> The use of a helmet is the key to reducing bicycling fatalities, which are due to head injuries 75% of the time. By cushioning the head upon impact, a helmet can reduce accidental injury by as much as 85%, saving the lives of hundreds of victims annually, half of whom are school children ("Bike Helmets" 348).
  - <sup>4</sup> Matisse paintings are remarkable in giving the viewer the distinct sensory impressions of one experiencing the scene first hand. For instance, "The Casbah Gate" takes one to the walled city of Tangier and the Bab el Aassa gateway near the Sultan's palace, where one can imagine standing on an afternoon, absorbing the splash of colors and the fine outlines. Even the sentry, the bowaab vaguely eyeing those who come and go through the gate, blends into the scene as though real (Plagens 50).
  - <sup>5</sup> How much higher skyscrapers of the future will rise than the present world marvel, the Sears Tower, is unknown. However, the design of one twice as tall is already on the boards, and an architect, Robert Sobel, thinks we currently have sufficient know-how to build a skyscraper with over 500 stories (Bachman 15).
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