

Additional editing exercises with possible solutions and paraphrasing

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Editing exercises

These have been adapted from writing, submitted to me for editing, that did not contain grammatical errors but could be written more directly. The research fields were also altered so that the authors could not be identified. Comments by Drs Jo McFarlane and Tash Ayers on drafts of this document were very helpful.

1. However, the factors were interrelated to one another and affected the systems to varying degrees. [15 words]
2. For at least three decades, government involvement personal fitness in Australia has increasingly become more prominent as a result of the recognition of national benefits from promoting personal fitness. [30 words]
3. Australia is considered to be one of the nations in the world most inclined to need to drink, if its drinking habits are judged from the average alcohol consumption figure in a year by each member of its population. [39 words]
4. A major change occurred as a result of the school's dismal performance at its first District Debating Competition. The team's last placing became the catalyst that caused the school's active participation in the development of student debating skills. The School's remarkable performances in debating competitions in subsequent years could be deemed to be due to the increase in staff resources and other support resulting from the School Principal's successful "intervention". [70 words]
5. In an attempt to identify an effective role for government to play in the promotion of the use of tax agents, this study explored and compared the Tax Offices of Brazil and Argentina. Especially, it focused on an examination of the current government taxation advice units at the national level (namely, the BXX and the AZZ respectively), as well as financial influences on their procedures. [65 words]
6. However, to facilitate the comparative analysis of data that was inadequate from documentary evidence, a quantitative forecasting technique was another key method used for data collection in the study. This technique provided a systematic procedure for obtaining information from diverse experts in the tourism industry, dispersed widely in each of the countries. [This comprises 52 words. Note that the acceptability to some journals of "data was" instead of "data were" is a recent trend.]
7. The main purpose of this study was to explore and compare the drinking water quality criteria of Australia and New Zealand in order to generate a set of recommendations that could assist the Australian Government in setting appropriate standards. [39 words]
8. Jones et al. (2007) assessed the success of the "We'll nail you" drink driving campaign via a household phone survey and found that there was a significant increase in the public's level of knowledge, of the police force's commitment to catching drink drivers, following the campaign. [44 words]
9. This review will explore the prevalence and incidence of bowel cancer rates with special focus on Australia and the reasons for such high bowel cancer rates in Australia, in particular the increasing consumption of "junk" foods. [36 words]
10. There has been a plateau in tendency to litter in Australia for people above the age of 30 (Smith, 2001) but, despite this, it remains a prominent social issue. [29 words]

Possible solutions to editing exercises (there is more than one way to write!)

1. However, the factors were interrelated and differed in their influence. [This comprises 10 words. It assumes that “systems” will be self evident from the rest of the paragraph.]
2. For at least 30 years, governments in Australia have become increasingly involved in promoting personal fitness because both the nation and individuals benefit. [This comprises 23 words. Extra information i.e., individual benefit, has been added.]
3. Based on annual per capita personal consumption, Australia is a particularly alcohol-reliant nation. [This comprises 14 words. If it is a nation, it is self-evident that it is “in the world”. The word “personal” is used to avoid confusion with industrial consumption.]
4. The School’s last placing at its first District Debating Competition was the catalyst for the School Principal’s direct “intervention”. Its remarkable performances in subsequent competitions could be attributed to her input of staff time and other support. [This comprises 37 words. Student experience could also be a factor.]
5. In this study, the Tax Offices of Argentina and Brazil were compared to devise an effective role for government in promoting tax agents. It focussed specifically on their national taxation advice units (AZZ and BXX respectively), and associated financial constraints. [This comprises 40 words. It is probably self-evident that if you “compared” you also “explored”. I could have said “tax agents’ usage” but it is awkward to read aloud.]
6. The quantitative forecasting technique complements that method by providing a systematic procedure for obtaining comparative information from diverse tourism experts across each country. [This comprises 23 words and it links better to the preceding sentence: “The initial analysis relied on any available sources of relevant documentary information”.]
7. This study compared the criteria for drinking water quality in Australia and New Zealand to help meet its major goal of generating recommendations for the Australian Government on relevant standards. [This comprises 30 words. While it “cost” a few more words, this version breaks up the noun string “drinking water quality criteria”.]
8. Based on a household phone survey, Jones et al. (2007) found that the “We’ll nail you” campaign had significantly increased the public’s knowledge of the police force’s commitment to catching drink drivers. [This comprises 32 words. It also avoids any confusion over what “following” qualified.]
9. This review explores the prevalence, incidence and causes of bowel cancer with particular focus on Australians and their increasing consumption of “junk” foods. [This comprises 23 words and avoids using “Australia” twice.]
10. Littering tendencies for Australians older than 30 (Smith, 2001) plateaued after 19XX but remain a prominent social issue. [This comprises 18 words. Note that information has been added i.e., when it began plateauing. Not all writers would use plateaued as a verb but this usage has become quite common.]

More detailed justifications for these possible solutions are provided below.

Paired editing exercises and possible solutions

1. However, the factors were interrelated to one another and affected the systems to varying degrees. [15 words]

However, the factors were interrelated and differed in their influence. [This comprises 10 words. It assumes that “systems” will be self-evident from the rest of the paragraph. The phrase “to one another” is clearly self-evident, given that “they are interrelated”.]

2. For at least three decades, government involvement in personal fitness in Australia has increasingly become more prominent as a result of the recognition of national benefits from promoting personal fitness. [30 words]

For at least 30 years, governments in Australia have become increasingly involved in promoting personal fitness because both the nation and individuals benefit. [This comprises 23 words. It is now written in a less passive style and this generally reduces the word count. Repetition of “personal fitness” is avoided. Extra information i.e., individual benefit, has been added. I have assumed that if the benefits have been recognised, they are genuine. Thus there is no need for “as a result of the recognition of”.]

3. Australia is considered to be one of the nations in the world most inclined to need to drink, if its drinking habits are judged from the average alcohol consumption figure in a year by each member of its population. [39 words]

Based on annual per capita personal consumption, Australia is a particularly alcohol-reliant nation. [This comprises 14 words. If it is a nation, it is self-evident that it is “in the world”. The word “personal” is used to avoid confusion with industrial consumption. I did not use “addicted to alcohol” because, for some but not all people, it may be more of a social reliance or it simply improves their enjoyment of food.]

4. A major change occurred as a result of the school’s dismal performance at its first District Debating Competition. The team’s last placing became the catalyst that caused the school’s active participation in the development of student debating skills. The School’s remarkable performances in debating competitions in subsequent years could be deemed to be due to the increase in staff resources and other support resulting from the School Principal’s successful “intervention”. [70 words]

The School’s last placing at its first District Debating Competition was the catalyst for the School Principal’s direct “intervention”. Its remarkable performances in subsequent competitions could be attributed to her input of staff time and other support. [This comprises 37 words. Individual words were repeated unnecessarily e.g., “school” (four times), “performance” (twice) and debating (three times). It is also self evident that “intervention”, “active participation in the development of student debating skills” and “increase in staff resources and other support” have overlapping meanings so one of these can be deleted. From a content perspective, student experience with debating competitions could also be a factor in this improvement.]

5. In an attempt to identify an effective role for government to play in the promotion of the use of tax agents, this study explored and compared the Tax Offices of Brazil and Argentina. Especially, it focussed on an examination of the current government taxation advice units at the

national level (namely, the BXX and the AZZ respectively), as well as financial influences on their procedures. [65 words]

In this study, the Tax Offices of Argentina and Brazil were compared to devise an effective role for government in promoting tax agents. It focussed specifically on their taxation advice units (AZZ and BXX respectively), and associated financial constraints. [This comprises 39 words. It is probably self-evident that if you “compared” you also “explored”. Again, there is excessive use of a word i.e., “government”, while “nation”, “Brazil and Argentina”, and “B” & “A” in BXX and AZZ provide similar information. The phrase “on their procedures” is probably self-evident. The text “In an attempt to identify” can be conveyed more directly. I could have said “tax agents’ usage” but it is awkward to read aloud.]

6. However, to facilitate the comparative analysis of data that was inadequate from just documentary evidence, a quantitative forecasting technique was another key method used for data collection in the study. This technique provided a systematic procedure for obtaining information from diverse experts in the tourism industry, dispersed widely in each of the countries. [This comprises 53 words. Note that the acceptability to some journals of “data was” instead of “data were” is a recent trend.]

The quantitative forecasting technique complements that method by providing a systematic procedure for obtaining comparative information from diverse tourism experts across each country. [This comprises 23 words and it links better to the preceding sentence: “The initial analysis relied on any available sources of relevant documentary information”. The verb “complements” is used to replace “that was inadequate from just documentary evidence”. The repeated use of “technique (or a similar word “method”) is an invitation to combine the sentences. The phrase “across each country” is a more concise version of “dispersed widely in each of the countries”.]

7. The main purpose of this study was to explore and compare the drinking water quality criteria of Australia and New Zealand in order to generate a set of recommendations that could assist the Australian Government in setting appropriate standards. [39 words]

This study compared the criteria for drinking water quality in Australia and New Zealand to help meet its major goal of generating recommendations for the Australian Government on relevant standards. [This comprises 30 words. While it “cost” a few more words, this version breaks up the noun string “drinking water quality criteria”. As in Exercise 5, “compare” is used to replace “explore and compare”.]

8. Jones et al. (2007) assessed the success of the “We’ll nail you” drink driving campaign via a household phone survey and found that there was a significant increase in the public’s level of knowledge, of the police force’s commitment to catching drink drivers, following the campaign. [46 words]

Based on a household phone survey, Jones et al. (2007) found that the “We’ll nail you” campaign had significantly increased the public’s knowledge of the police force’s commitment to catching drink drivers. [This comprises 32 words. It also avoids any confusion over what “following” qualified.]

9. This review will explore the prevalence and incidence of bowel cancer rates with special focus on Australia and the reasons for such high bowel cancer rates in Australia, in particular the increasing consumption of “junk” foods. [36 words]

This review explores the prevalence, incidence and causes of bowel cancer with particular focus on Australians and their increasing consumption of “junk” foods. [This comprises 23 words and is written much more directly. As such, it is much easier to read (especially aloud). It also avoids using “Australia” twice. This version does not say that bowel cancer rates are high in Australia but it may be inferred by the emphasis on “increasing consumption of ‘junk’ foods.”]

10. There has been a plateau in tendency to litter in Australia for people above the age of 30 (Smith, 2001) but, despite this, it remains a prominent social issue. [29 words]

Littering tendencies by Australians older than 30 (Smith, 2001) plateaued after 19XX but remain a prominent social issue. [This comprises 18 words. Note that information has been added i.e., when it began plateauing, as this would be needed in such a descriptive statement. Not all writers would use “plateaued” as a verb but this usage has become quite common.]

Using these possible solutions as paraphrasing exercises

Issues associated with paraphrasing

To provide an opportunity to look at paraphrasing, let us assume (incorrectly) that these possible solutions are quotes. We may not want to include them in an article as quotes so we must substantially reword them. (As noted below, I do recognise that substantial paraphrasing occurred while generating these possible solutions.)

One guideline is that you should not “borrow” sequences of five or more words from another source. A variation on this problem is combining sections from different sentences, in someone else’s writing, so that the resultant sentence is still excessively borrowed. When you take notes from a paper, highlight any word sequences in your notes that are now quotes e.g., with a highlighter for hard copy or with yellow paint for an e-copy.

With a whole sentence, it is usually helpful to rearrange the sequence of information, for example in 4 below, instead of beginning with “The school’s”, the paraphrased text begins with “The Principal”. This is more difficult in 6 below so there is a strong reliance on writing in a more direct style than in the “quote” or on using synonyms (but not for key words e.g., jargon).

One of the arguments for paraphrasing a quote is that you may be able to write it better. One of the drivers for better writing is that it is more concise and thus helps you comply with a maximum word limit for a document.

Qualitative research aside, quotes do have a place although writing that is overly reliant on quotes can be a distraction of examiners and referees. Moreover, good paraphrasing helps convey the idea that you have thought critically about the material.

One of the risks for research students is that their Supervisors may edit the paraphrased version and unintentionally end up with revised text that closely resembles the original quote.

A more widespread problem is that paraphrasing text, which has already been paraphrased, can change the original meaning. In this document, each exercise (v1) was paraphrased to a degree while generating an edited version (v2) which, in turn, provided an opportunity for more substantial paraphrasing as v3. I found that I had to compare v1 and v3 to ensure that the original meaning had not changed significantly, except as advised in the explanatory notes for v2.

I strongly recommend that you use TURNITIN as a learning tool to identify any tendencies you have towards using borrowed text, long before you are formally required to do this when submitting your research proposal or thesis.

Paraphrasing examples based on the possible solutions from the preceding exercises

1. However, the factors were interrelated and differed in their influence. (Paraphrased version: These related factors did not have the same effect [on the systems].)

2. For at least 30 years, governments in Australia have become increasingly involved in promoting personal fitness because both the nation and individuals benefit.
(*Paraphrased version:* Governments, over three decades or more, have progressively become stronger advocates for physical fitness as it helps both Australia and its people.)
3. Based on annual per capita personal consumption, Australia is a particularly alcohol-reliant nation.
(*Paraphrased version:* The average annual amount of alcohol drunk per person suggests that Australians are strongly reliant on it.) [Using the word “drunk” ignores alcohol used in preparing solid food but this would be minor.]
4. The School’s last placing at its first District Debating Competition was the catalyst for the School Principal’s direct “intervention”. Its remarkable performances in subsequent competitions could be attributed to her input of staff time and other support.
(*Paraphrased version:* The Principal’s response to her school finishing last at its initial District Debating Competition was to provide more resources including help from teachers; based on its ranking in later debates, this was highly effective.)
5. In this study, the Tax Offices of Argentina and Brazil were compared to devise an effective role for government in promoting tax agents. It focussed specifically on their taxation advice units (AZZ and BXX respectively), and associated financial constraints.
(*Paraphrased version:* We compared the respective taxation advice organisations of the Argentine and Brazilian governments (AZZ and BZZ), particularly their budget limitations, to help develop government strategies for encouraging people to utilise tax agents.) [This assumes that it was our study.]
6. The quantitative forecasting technique complements that method by providing a systematic procedure for obtaining comparative information from diverse tourism experts across each country.
(*Paraphrased version:* The quantitative forecasting strategy provides useful additional information by methodically comparing data from knowledgeable tourism sources across each nation.)
7. This study compared the criteria for drinking water quality in Australia and New Zealand to help meet its major goal of generating recommendations for the Australian Government on relevant standards.
(*Paraphrased version:* This study produced guidelines for the Australian Government to set suitable quality criteria for potable water, based on an informed comparison of standards in developed Australasian countries. [This would suit a regional audience that is aware of the meaning of “Australasian” i.e. the southern Pacific islands, including Australia, New Zealand, and New Guinea. In this context, the word “developed” infers Australia and New Zealand.]

8. Jones et al. (2007), using a household phone survey, found that the public's knowledge of the police force's commitment to catching drink drivers had increased significantly following the "We'll nail you" campaign. *(Paraphrased version: A domestic phone survey revealed that "We'll nail you" advertisements had fostered greater public recognition of the police force's determination to detect drink drivers (Jones et al., 2007).*
9. This review explores the prevalence, incidence and causes of bowel cancer with particular focus on Australians and their increasing consumption of "junk" foods. *(Paraphrased version: This review highlights any links between the rising intake of "junk" food in Australia and the occurrence and causes of bowel cancer. [This assumes that "occurrence" adequately covers the dual measures of "prevalence" and "incidence".]*
10. Littering tendencies for Australians older than 30 (Smith, 2001) plateaued after 19XX but remain a prominent social issue. *(Paraphrased version: Smith (2001) showed that, after 19xx, littering by Australians (age >30 years) did not change substantially but still troubled the nation.*

(Version at 29/8/12)