Paragraph writing

The following exercises build your ability to write a paragraph.

Each paragraph is written as part of an essay on the topic: Paraphrasing and citing sources are skills that can enhance a student’s ability to acquire and display their knowledge; yet many students find these skills difficult. Discuss.

1. Write a topic sentence for the following paragraph.

(Topic sentence required)

Reading can be engaged in uncritically if it merely is used to gain information or ideas from a source. However, when writers are required to provide a citation they are forced to examine who is the author of the ideas they are selecting. This is a basis for the development of a critical relation to the work (Barry, 2006, p. 383). By consciously citing authors, writers are laying the foundation for an assessment of both the writers in the area and their ideas.

2. Write a background or introductory sentence for the following paragraph. To create coherence in the paragraph, you will probably need to make slight alterations to the sentence immediately following your background or introductory sentence.

Students who speak and write English as a second language may experience difficulty in paraphrasing. (Background or introductory sentence required)

Second language users are likely to find that they either do not know the meaning of a section within a source or, if they do, they may not have a sufficient knowledge of English to find suitable synonyms for them. In either case, they are unlikely to be able to
paraphrase correctly (Diaz-Gilbert, 2005, p. L7). Paraphrasing requires a high level of language ability to make the re-working of sentences an easy and natural task.

3. Write a sentence to elaborate or explain the claim in the following paragraph.

Paraphrasing is harder to accomplish when the source is difficult to read. Clearly, the ability to write in "your own words", depends in large part on understanding the original source. Indeed, Roig (as cited in Jackson, 2006) found students were less able to paraphrase well when the text they were using as a source had either difficult subject matter or language. In these cases, students borrowed heavily from the original source (p. 420). (A sentence providing elaboration or further explanation required)

4. Write a paragraph built around the claim underlined in the following extract from an article by Pamela A. Jackson, published in 2006 (make sure you paraphrase the claim).

Extract

p. 420

Recent plagiarism research strongly concludes that students lack an understanding of and ability to paraphrase. In 1997, Miguel Roig tested students' ability to recognize plagiarized text by giving students original and paraphrased passages. Roig notes that students "appeared to be confused as to the extent to which original text needs to be modified and about the conditions under which a citation is necessary" (Roig, 1997). In 1999, Roig conducted a second study that asked students to read an original passage and write a paraphrase. When the original passage was more complex, either in subject matter or reading level, students were more likely to plagiarize by simply rearranging the passage, leaving more of the author's original language in their paraphrase (Roig, 1999).