



Sometimes you don't need "that" word.

Paraphrasing is rewording or summarizing a report or quote, without quotation marks. When you're paraphrasing, you don't always have to use the word "that."

In other words, "that" serves a higher, more clarifying purpose in writing. Here's how you know if you can drop "that" like it's hot or . . . not.

You can delete "that" from a sentence if it directly follows a verb that means "to say" and makes sense without it:

- The report said ~~that~~ nine out of 10 hot dogs were beef. (Drop it!)

Also drop "that" if the clause following it is simple (two or three words):

- He said ~~that~~ he was tired. (Drop it!)

But keeping "that" helps avoid confusion if there are other words between the verb and the dependent clause. In this example, "that" helps the reader understand the announcer hasn't announced the new policy, but a preview of the new policy.

- She announced **that** the new policy would include many changes. (Keep it!)

Also keep "that" if it follows a time element:

- The governor disclosed **that** August 1 the budget would be exhausted. (Keep it!)
- The governor disclosed **that** the budget would be exhausted August 1. (Keep it! Also, this sentence is clearer than the one above it!)

If you're not sure, read the sentence out loud to see if it's confusing without "that," or if "that" is unnecessary. If you're still not sure, keep "that"—or ask your closest friendly writer-editor.

One helpful way of thinking about "that" is to think of the word as a cue, letting the reader know that the next chunk of information is larger than a single element. In the second sentence above, without the word "that," it would read "The governor disclosed the budget..." This would seem to the reader that

the governor is simply making the budget public. Then, upon reading more, the reader would realize that this was incorrect, and the governor was, in fact, letting them know something about the budget. Disrupting the reader's cognitive flow by implying a false point and then correcting it right after is distracting. By using "that," the reader understands that a larger chunk of information is coming and avoids that moment of confusion.