

## Paraphrasing

Writers paraphrase when they want to use another person's ideas to support or enhance their own work without quoting the source directly. Paraphrases therefore do not use the source's original words or sentence structure. Instead, a paraphrase summarizes the most important or relevant information from a source. Paraphrases are frequently used in academic writing, and are especially important in science writing, where direct quotes are discouraged. Good paraphrases accurately summarize the relevant ideas by clearly and concisely re-wording and re-structuring the information contained in a source. Simply changing a few words or re-arranging the order of words in a sentence does not constitute paraphrasing – it is plagiarism.

### CITING PARAPHRASES

When paraphrasing, it is of the utmost importance that you let your reader know the origin of the ideas or information you are using. Because paraphrases (unlike direct quotes) do not contain a grammatical signal that the ideas come from another source, you must provide a signal within your sentence. Clauses such as “Smith argues...” or “Frankenstein found that...” signal to the reader that the ideas that follow them are not your own. Think of paraphrases as the record of a conversation; you want to make clear who is saying what.

In APA citation style, all in-text citations (including those of paraphrases) require an author name and a year of publication. The 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the APA Manual of Style also encourages a page or paragraph number if the material paraphrased comes from a particular part of a longer work. Note that other citation styles may require more or less information when citing paraphrases. The examples on this handout will use APA style.

### WHEN TO PARAPHRASE

In scientific fields, paraphrase is the main way to cite the ideas and research of others in your paper. In the humanities, both direct quotations and paraphrases are used to incorporate outside research. Sometimes, it can be difficult to decide when to use a paraphrase or when to directly quote a source. Here are some guidelines for when to use a paraphrase:

- When what the other person is saying is more important than how they say it.
- When you want to condense or summarize a multi-page argument or point.
- When you are providing background for your own argument rather than analyzing someone else's
- When the source you are using is wordy, confusing, or awkward to quote directly.

Note that these are only suggestions of when you may consider paraphrasing. There are other cases in which it may be appropriate or inappropriate. For situations that use direct quotations, see the “Using and Framing Direct Quotations” handout.

### READING, NOTE-TAKING, AND PARAPHRASING

A good paraphrase begins in the research stages of your project. If you do not keep track of your sources, you risk forgetting the origins of ideas and information that are not your own (see example #1). If you have to re-read a source once you start writing, you may end up unintentionally plagiarizing that source in your paper (see example #3). The best way to keep track of your sources is through careful note-taking. As you read an article or book, track the most important parts (the thesis, relevant facts, particularly expressive language). Then, once you have finished reading, summarize the main point of the article or book in no more than one to two sentences *of your own words*. This will not only be the starting point should you need to paraphrase that source in your paper, it will also help you retain and understand the information you read.

## SAMPLE PARAPHRASES

### #1 Incorrect Example: Failure to Cite Source

**Original:** “As I’ve said, Treisman’s insight was noticing this pattern and then going behind the scenes to understand it. There he saw black students – in an effort to succeed where their abilities are negatively stereotyped – following a strategy of intense, isolated effort, a strategy that set them up for defeats and discouragements” (Steele, 2010, p. 103).

**Paraphrase:** Black students are hard workers, but they have a tendency to avoid seeking help and do their academic work alone rather than in groups.

**Explanation:** This paraphrase is an accurate summary of the information in the original passage, but it lacks citation. The author has plagiarized the ideas and work of another. You might notice an additional danger in this particular paraphrase: without a citation that establishes that these facts came from a research study, the paraphrase looks like an unsupported stereotype about black students.

### #2 Incorrect Example: Inaccurate Paraphrase

**Original:** “The Waadookodaading Ojibwe Immersion Charter School in Reserve, Wisconsin, had for ten years garnered a 100 percent pass rate on state-mandated tests administered in English, and the teachers do not speak to the kids in English until the higher grades. Even wealthy, predominantly white suburban school districts don’t usually score so consistently high. Tribal language education is a powerful tool for the development of everything from cognitive function to basic self-esteem” (Truer, 2009, p. 81).

**Paraphrase:** Truer (2009) cites the Waadookodaading Ojibwe Immersion Charter School as a rare example of the success of a tribal education program. According to Truer (2009), despite the fact that children in this school are not taught English, their standardized test scores are exceptionally good (p. 81).

**Explanation:** This paraphrase uses correct in-text citations and attributions, but it is not an accurate summary. In fact, the framing of the paraphrase suggests exactly the opposite of the original selection.

### #3 Incorrect Example: Lack of Significant Rewording

**Original:** “The marginalization of the Red Lake people in the fishery plant development and sale pricing was all the more maddening because Red Lake was supposed to be a business partner with the state and Indians did most of the work” (Truer, 2015, p. 213).

**Paraphrase:** Truer (2015) notes that the people of Red Lack were marginalized in the fish plant development and sale pricing, and it was maddening because Indians did most of the work and Red Lake and the state were supposed to be business partners (2015).

**Explanation:** This excerpt is too similar to the source to be considered a paraphrase. While small changes have been made, most of the words come directly from the original source and the order in which they are written is only slightly different. This attempted paraphrase constitutes plagiarism.

### #4 Correct Example

**Original:** “The historical and cultural contexts for multicultural literature are essential companions to the texts themselves in the critical multiculturalist’s effort to acknowledge and accommodate differences and situate those differences within history and lived experience” (Chick, 2009, p. 175).

**Paraphrase:** Because Chick (2009) believes that the primary goal of multicultural literature courses is the acknowledgement of difference, she claims that context is critical when teaching such courses (p. 175).