

Handout Number Seven

Learn to Paraphrase

A paraphrase is a detailed restatement in your own words of a written or sometimes spoken passage. Apart from the changes in organization, wording, and sentence structure, the paraphrase should be nearly identical in meaning to the original passage.

How do I Paraphrase?

When paraphrasing, follow the guidelines listed below:

- Include all important ideas mentioned in the original passage but not in the same order.
- Keep the length approximately the same as the original.
- Do not stress any single point more than another.
- Do not change the meaning by adding your own thoughts or views.
- Do not use the original sentence structure.

You may find it helpful to use the following five steps when paraphrasing:

1. Understand the meaning of the passage thoroughly. You may have to read the passage several times and consult a dictionary.
2. Outline the passage or subdivide the information into smaller sections. Remember that the paraphrase must include all the important ideas mentioned in the original passage.
3. Restate the information remembering the following:
 - a) Replace as many of the words as possible with appropriate synonyms. Sometimes you may have to substitute a phrase in place of a word, or a word in place of a phrase. You must consider the context in which the word is used. Using an inappropriate synonym may change the entire meaning of the passage.
 - b) Change the order and structure of the ideas or argument.
 - c) Change the structure of the sentences. All of us have our own writing style. Change the sentences to reflect yours. Be careful not to change the meaning by adding or leaving out any important information.
4. Make sure that you are faithful to the meaning of the source and that you have accurately represented the main ideas.
5. Cite appropriately and integrate the paraphrase into the text effectively.

Some examples to compare

The original passage:

Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes. Lester, James D. *Writing Research Papers*. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.

A legitimate paraphrase:

In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester 46-47).

An acceptable summary:

Students should take just a few notes in direct quotation from sources to help minimize the amount of quoted material in a research paper (Lester 46-47).

A plagiarized version:

Students often use too many direct quotations when they take notes, resulting in too many of them in the final research paper. In fact, probably only about 10% of the final copy should consist of directly quoted material. So it is important to limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes.