

Integrating Sources Effectively: How to Paraphrase

Paraphrasing is the art of expressing someone else's idea or information in your *own* words (you *must* still cite the original source). A paraphrase of someone's work usually offers more detail than a summary of the same information, and is often, but not always, more concise than the original.

Of all the skills required by scholarship, good paraphrasing is one of the most essential. Here are some rules of thumb:

- Paraphrase *more*; quote *less*.
- Paraphrase to explain a point from a source.
- Use your own words and use your own sentence structure.
- *Really* good paraphrases are structured to show how the source's point is connected to yours.

Metaphrase vs. Paraphrase

If you keep the original sentence structure and simply replace some terms with synonyms, even if you cite the source, it's plagiarism by metaphrase. Paraphrase by writing the idea in your own words and in a new sentence structure. For example,

original

*Three **different** but **complementary** versions of the questionnaire were **developed**.*

metaphrase

*Three **unlike** but **compatible** kinds of the questionnaire were **produced**.*

paraphrase

The investigators created three related questionnaires.

A valid paraphrase must do more than change/reorder the author's words. **Metaphrasing is plagiarism!**

To paraphrase properly...

Set the original source aside as you are writing your paraphrase.

- Once you've set aside the original, write the main point of what you just read. Write it as though you're telling it to someone who needs the information but has a bus to catch in two minutes.
- Go back to the original again to see if your paraphrase captures its main point.
- If not, set the source aside and try again.
- Check your final version against the original after writing it in your own words to ensure that the *meaning* of the original passage remains intact, but that you haven't metaphrased.
- If you use any key phrases or unique wording from the original author, place these in quotation marks.
- Always include a citation!

Paraphrasing Example

Source Text

Nowaczyk, Santos, and Patton (1998) assessed student perceptions of PPT use in an introductory behavioral statistics course and found that **students** reported at both the midterm and final exams that they **preferred PPT** to help them understand the course material. **However**, at the final exam, students reported that they favored the traditional lecture format for enhancing actual classroom interaction among students and the instructor. The last finding, along with other research, indicates that PPT may at a minimum have a neutral effect on classroom interaction and may potentially even deter classroom interactions by **minimizing classroom spontaneity** (Murphy, 2002) and hindering deeper discussions of material (Cyphert, 2004; Hanft, 2003; McDonald, 2004).

Paraphrased Text

Although university students see PPT as beneficial to their understanding of material, research suggests that PPT might limit impromptu discussions in the classroom (Nowaczyk, Santos, & Patton, 1998).

“Why do I need to know how to paraphrase and summarize information? Can’t readers just go to my source if they want to know more about it?”

No. Here’s why:

- Whatever you’re telling the reader about someone else’s idea is useful only insofar as it relates to your point.
- The reader only needs to understand the idea you’re working with, not its details.
- If you give the reader too much of what *others* say, the reader will lose sight of *your* point.
- Think **illustration**, not **reiteration**.