



Graduate Online Writing Studio

Effective Paraphrasing Tips

According to the Seventh Edition of the APA Manual (2020), paraphrasing or putting ideas into original words helps writers avoid plagiarism. Paraphrasing allows writers to demonstrate their mastery of the source's ideas as they incorporate those ideas into their words, often providing readers with more concise and understandable interpretations of those ideas. Writers still need to cite paraphrased information, but citations for paraphrased material do not need to include page or paragraph numbers to indicate where the material appears in the original source since the words do not appear in that source. Writers may include page numbers for paraphrased material if they want to assist their readers in finding the information in the source (e.g., a book). Here are a few tips to help you paraphrase effectively:

1. Make sure you understand the source material before paraphrasing it.

First, read the source material thoroughly. Second, reread the source material. In other words, ensure that you understand the content before you rewrite it in your original words. Use active reading strategies like looking up unfamiliar words or taking notes so that you know that you fully comprehend what the sources is saying before you begin to make it your own.

2. Do not look at the source while you are trying to paraphrase.

If you look at the source material while you are paraphrasing, it is very easy to slip into the source material's voice or language without meaning to. Before beginning your paraphrasing and after ensuring you understand the material, minimize the window with the source material, flip over the page, or close the book so that you are not tempted to copy even a phrase or two as you work to incorporate the source's ideas into your original sentences. This simple act can help you to avoid accidentally plagiarizing as you paraphrase.

3. Use a completely different sentence structure than the original source material.

When beginning to paraphrase, writers sometimes mimic the sentence structure of the original source material. When working to paraphrase a sentence or even an entire passage, one of the best ways to differentiate your paraphrased language from the language of the source is to restructure the sentence.

- **Original:** Use a professional tone when describing a concept, idea, or finding in your own words.
- **Similar Sentence Structure:** Use a formal tone when paraphrasing any source material.
- **Effective Paraphrase:** When paraphrasing, it is essential to maintain professionalism.

4. Do not just use a thesaurus to change a few words.

Often when people think of paraphrasing, they think that it just involves changing up a few words so that the sentence is not the same as the source material and that they can quickly turn to the thesaurus to swap the source's words for synonyms. Both ideas are incorrect. Paraphrasing, as mentioned above, is about completely rewording the information in an original way, and thesauruses, unless used carefully, often lead people to use words that do not have the same meaning or connotation as the original word. Use your words, not the thesaurus's, as you paraphrase.

- **Original:** Plagiarism is the act of presenting the words, ideas, or images of another as your own.
- **Using Thesaurus:** Plagiarism is the deed of representing the terms, thoughts, or pictures of someone else as your own.
- **Effective Paraphrase:** Plagiarism misrepresents work created by someone else as original work.

5. Summarize and/or synthesize information as you paraphrase.

One of the easiest ways to paraphrase effectively is to take a larger portion of text and condense it down to its main ideas by summarizing or synthesizing the information. Summarizing is providing a brief overview of a longer passage.

- **Original:** There are different types of plagiarism and all are serious violations of academic honesty. Direct plagiarism is the word-for-word transcription of a section of someone else's work, without attribution and without quotation marks. Although it is less common than direct plagiarism, plagiarism does not always involve someone else's ideas. Self-plagiarism occurs when a student submits his or her own previous work, or mixes parts of previous works, without permission from all professors involved.
- **Summarized:** While many see plagiarism as an act of stealing another person's work without giving them credit, self-plagiarism, the act of turning in one's previous work as something newly written, is also academically dishonest.

Synthesis is the act of combining multiple things into one. This method can be used effectively when trying to incorporate information from several sources into your work. If several sources discuss the same information or information that is closely related, you can synthesize several sources' information into one paraphrased sentence and cite all sources being paraphrased at the end of the sentence, separating each source's citation information with semicolons (Massie, 2021; Cooper, 2019).

Remember that because paraphrased material contains the ideas of others, it must be cited according to APA guidelines. Paraphrasing without citing would still be considered plagiarism. With that in mind, be sure to give proper credit even when paraphrasing to ensure that you have truly avoided plagiarism.