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The Art of Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is the rewording of something to express it with greater clarity.

Paraphrasing is a skill you will want to have in your back pocket when you write a research article. Paraphrasing is an efficient way to integrate multiple other works to support a claim you want to make. In addition, it can help you communicate a lengthy idea in a more succinct way for your research article. In this module, you will learn:

1. The different forms of plagiarism.
2. When to paraphrase.
3. When not to paraphrase.
4. How to paraphrase.

1. Creating a Paraphrase

Example 1: Humanities paraphrase

Excerpted from Calcagno, M. (2005). Review of “Diving the Oracle: Monteverdi’s “Seconda Prattica“. *Notes, Second Series*, 62(1), p. 127-130).

Original text:

“In *Divining the Oracle* Massimo Ossi takes the stance that, though we regret the loss of that treatise, we still have enough material to surmise—or “divine”—Monteverdi’s views on *seconda prattica*, a term the composer himself claimed to have invented.”

Paraphrase:

Calcagno (2005) explains how there was a loss of historical documentation outlining Monteverdi's views on *seconda prattica*, but luckily we retained enough information to infer his views.

Example 2: STEM paraphrase

Excerpted from Wang, F., Marashdeh, Q., Fan, L. S., & Warsito, W. (2005). Electrical capacitance volume tomography: Design and applications. *Sensors*, 10, 1890-1917.

Original text:

“The sensor shape, configurations, and channel number play an important role both for the two- dimensional ECT and three-dimensional ECVT measurements. Based on the reconstructed image characteristics, capacitance sensors are classified into two-dimensional ECT sensors and three- dimensional ECVT sensors.”

Paraphrase:

Wang et al. (2010) classify sensors into two categories: 1) two-dimensional ECT, and 2) three-dimensional ECVT sensors. The shape, configurations, and channel number all influence these classifications.

2. Tips for Paraphrasing

1. You cannot just change a few words from a source and consider it paraphrased. That is plagiarism.
2. Re-read the original source until you understand its meaning well; you might need to look up the meaning of unfamiliar words. This will make it easier for you to paraphrase.

3. Once you understand a passage, think about what you want to share from it with your readers, and write that down without looking at the original text.
4. Compare what you've written to the original text and clean up any weak or plagiarized sentences.
5. Paraphrase unless you have a good reason to use a direct quote from a source.
6. Paraphrases are different than summaries: summaries are usually shorter than the original source and provide less detail whereas paraphrases are about the same length and provide the same amount of detail as the original.
7. Always add in-text and reference section citations even though you paraphrased. **If you don't this is still plagiarism.**
8. Try out Indiana University's and Williams College's exercises on recognizing plagiarism.

3. Let's Work Through an Example

This example was adapted from the University of Wisconsin [The Writing Handbook](#). Original journal article: Chase, S. K. (1995). The social context of critical care clinical judgment. *Heart and Lung*, 24, 154-162.

The Passage as It Appears in the Source

Critical care nurses function in a hierarchy of roles. In this open heart surgery unit, the nurse manager hires and fires the nursing personnel. The nurse manager is considered the expert on the team and does not directly care for patients, but follows the progress of unusual or long-term patients.

Word-for-Word Plagiarism

Critical care nurses have a **hierarchy of roles**. **The nurse manager hires and fires nurses**. Since s/he is the expert, **s/he does not directly care for patients but does follow unusual or long-term patients**.

Why this is plagiarism:

The bolded phrases in this paraphrase are taken directly from the source and are therefore plagiarized.

A Patchwork Paraphrase

Chase (1995) describes how nurses in a critical care unit function in a hierarchy of roles that places designated experts at the top and the least senior staff nurses at the bottom. The nurse manager is considered the expert and is not involved directly in patient care, but hires and fires other nurses.

Why this is plagiarism:

This paragraph is composed of pieces in the original author's language and pieces in the student-writer's words. It's rearranged into a new pattern, but none of the borrowed pieces are in quotation marks. Even though the writer acknowledges the source of the material, the borrowed phrases need to be in quotation marks.

An Acceptable Paraphrase

In her study of the roles of nurses in a critical care unit, Chase (1995) found a "hierarchy of roles" that distinguished the roles of experts and others (p. 156).

The expert nurse managers in this unit do not directly attend to patients. We see a similar distinction of roles in groups of teachers, who also have a hierarchy of experts and non-experts (Williams, 1987).

Why this is correct:

The writer has documented Chase's material and specific language by direct reference to the author and by quotation marks around language taken directly from the source. Notice too that the writer has added material about teachers to fit the new context and purpose of presenting distinctive functions of experts in various professions.

4. When NOT to Paraphrase

1. The University of Wisconsin Writing Center lists 4 scenarios where you should quote a source instead of paraphrasing it:
 - a. When you want to use authoritative language to support your point.
 - b. When you are referring to a particular statement that you would like to comment on. For example, if your research is about a work or works of literature, and you are referring to the original work in your article to critique it.
 - c. When the source phrases a statement in a particularly moving way, or if you want to maintain the colloquial integrity of a statement.
 - d. If you cannot imagine a better way of stating something, or it would lose its meaning if you paraphrased. Perhaps you've noticed that two phrases from the original passage appear in the acceptable paraphrase: critical care and nurse manager. In certain genres or fields, some phrases are so specialized or conventional that you cannot paraphrase them unless you use wordy and awkward language that would be less readable to the audience. When you repeat these phrases, you are not stealing the unique phrasing of an

- individual writer, but using a common vocabulary shared by a community of scholars.
2. A general rule of thumb here is that if you are taking more than three words directly from a source and they are not common, conventional phrases, either directly quote the phrase or change the words to avoid plagiarizing. Indiana University condones up to seven words in a row, so there is some discrepancy about when using other's words becomes direct plagiarism. In order to avoid any suspicion, err on the side of caution and put quotation marks around groupings of three or more words from the source.
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Sources and Additional Resources:

1. The University of Wisconsin: Avoiding Plagiarism
2. Princeton University: When to Cite Sources
3. Purdue OWL: Paraphrase
4. Harvard: Summarizing, Paraphrasing, and Quoting
5. Indiana University: Recognizing Plagiarism
6. Williams College: Quoting, Summarizing, and Paraphrasing