



Paraphrasing

What is a paraphrase?

A paraphrase is the rewording the ideas expressed by a writer or speaker. It might be helpful to think of a paraphrase as a translation of someone's words into your own expression of that person's written/spoken ideas. In order to paraphrase properly, it is necessary to do more than just change some words.

Attribution & Citation

When you paraphrase the statements of an author or speaker, you put their ideas into your own words and *attribute those ideas* to that author/speaker by referring to their name when introducing the paraphrased material. In addition, citations are necessary with paraphrased material just as they are with quotations.

Paraphrase when you want to:

- clarify or convey the ideas in a short passage from a text or speech
- avoid overusing quotations
- explain a point when exact wording isn't important
- explain the main points of a passage in fewer words than the original source
- show your understanding of the text
- note the important research that precedes your own

How to avoid copying too much wording or structure from the original:

Examine the original statement or passage and jot down the main ideas in your own words. Be sure you fully understand what the author is saying. Then, without looking at the original, convey the ideas of the passage in your own way, in keeping with the voice and tone of your writing.

EXAMPLE:

Original concluding paragraph of an essay about schools and education:

Schools should be for education. At present, they are only tangentially so. They have attempted to serve an all-encompassing social function, trying to be all things to all people. In the process they have failed miserably at what they were originally formed to accomplish.

[Sipher, Roger. "So That Nobody Has to Go to School If They Don't Want To." The New York Times, 19 Dec. 1977, p. 31.]

One possible paraphrase of the above concluding paragraph:

Roger Sipher concludes his essay by insisting that schools have failed to fulfill their primary duty of education because they try to fill multiple social functions (par. 17).

Adapted from

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