

HOW TO PARAPHRASE

Lesson Objective

In this lesson, you will practice using your own words to present facts and opinions of others. This is called *paraphrasing*. We paraphrase for a variety of reasons in both speaking and writing. In this lesson, we will focus on writing. Let's start by exploring a block of written text.

Warm-Up

A. Writing

Find an excerpt of text (no more than three sentences) and rewrite it in your own words. Choose one exact word or phrase from the original and place quotations around it in your own version.

1. What was the original piece mainly about?
2. What's the one word or phrase you placed in quotations, and why did you choose to include it in your version?
3. Who was the author and what was the source?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match these words to their correct definitions.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. excerpt | a) to make shorter |
| _____ 2. paraphrase | b) proof |
| _____ 3. condense | c) a reference in round brackets that leads to the original source |
| _____ 4. original | d) a person or source with experience or expertise |
| _____ 5. source | e) to use one's own words to share another's information or research |
| _____ 6. plagiarism | f) the first of its kind |
| _____ 7. evidence | g) the copying and presenting of another's work as if it were one's own |
| _____ 8. authority | h) to set apart or show as different |
| _____ 9. distinguish | i) a small section of text, video, or audio |
| _____ 10. parenthetical citation | j) the place that holds the original information (book, video, article, etc.) |

Introduction to Paraphrasing

A. What is Paraphrasing?

In writing, *paraphrasing* means rewording an excerpt (a block of text). The excerpt is usually a single sentence or paragraph. You might also paraphrase something you hear or see, such as a lecture or a video.

Paraphrasing is closely related to quoting and summarizing. A *summary* is an overview of a main idea. A *quote* is the exact wording of the original text in quotation marks. A *paraphrase* is somewhere in the middle.

When you paraphrase, you use your own words to rephrase the original thought or information. You also give credit where credit is due.

Parts of Speech

paraphrase (n):
a reworded version
of an original excerpt

paraphrase (v):
to rephrase an original
excerpt into one's own words

B. 3 Keys To Paraphrasing

1. Rephrase the excerpt or information in your own words with a new structure and style.
2. Use quotation marks around any unique phrasing copied directly from an original source.
3. Credit the original source (unless it's based on very common knowledge).

Rule of Thumb

When paraphrasing, avoid using more than two or three words in a row in the same way as the original. If you want to use the exact phrasing for effect, place the phrase in "quotation marks" and provide the source. You will learn how to do that later in this lesson.

Introduction to Paraphrasing cont.

C. 10 Paraphrasing Methods to Try

When paraphrasing in writing, it is not enough to change a few of the original words. You also need to change the sentence structure and style of the excerpt (*syntax*) to make it your own.

Here are some methods to try. Make a few of these changes each time you paraphrase. You will get a chance to try some of these throughout this lesson and in the Writing Challenge at the end.

1. Use **synonyms** to change some of the original words.
2. Change the **parts of speech** for some of the original words.
3. Change information that is in the **active** voice to the **passive** voice (or **third person** to **second** or **first person**).
4. Change the **order** of how the information is presented.
5. **Eliminate** any unnecessary words (e.g., reduce clauses).
6. Turn **simple** sentences into **complex** sentences (e.g., create relative clauses).
7. **Combine** or **divide** thoughts or sentences to change the structure.
8. Use your own **handwritten** reading **notes** (without looking at or listening to the original source).
9. If possible, allow **time** to pass between reading/researching and writing.
10. Don't forget to mention the **source** of the original information.

D. Practice

Use the information from pages 2–3 to write your responses below.

1. Summarize the *3 Keys to Paraphrasing* (page 2).

2. Quote a sentence from pages 2–3.

3. Paraphrase the first paragraph in *10 Paraphrasing Methods to Try* (above).

5 Reasons for Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing in spoken English is something that you do every day without noticing. In conversation, you often reword or rephrase something that you learned or heard from others. In writing, paraphrasing is similar. Here are five reasons you may need to paraphrase in writing.

A. To Explain

In an academic setting (e.g., answering comprehension questions on a test), you often need to prove that you understand what you read, heard, or saw by explaining it in your own words.

Task 1

1. Look up some facts. Copy one full sentence (word-for-word) about a fact that interests you.

2. Show your sentence above to your partner. Your partner will paraphrase it below to explain it in his/her own words.

B. To Simplify and/or Condense

Sometimes you paraphrase to make the original information easier for your readers. You use a simpler structure and shorter words that are easier to understand.

Note:

When *summarizing*, we only include the main idea(s). When *paraphrasing*, we can simplify but still include most of the original details. This type of paraphrasing is very common in speaking.

Task 2

Simplify/condense *What is Paraphrasing?* (page 2). Use a few *synonyms* to change the original wording.

5 Reasons for Paraphrasing cont.

C. To Provide Evidence

Paraphrasing is commonly used to provide evidence for your argument or thesis in an essay or article. You rephrase the information you learned from a trusted source. This type of paraphrasing is very common in academic writing. Notice how the source is credited in the paraphrased version.

Example

ORIGINAL PASSAGE:

"I believe in hard work and luck and that the first often leads to the second." —J.K. Rowling

PARAPHRASED PASSAGE:

Even J.K. Rowling believes success requires a bit of luck. She believes that "hard work" typically comes first, though.

D. To Distinguish/Share Opinions

Paraphrasing is also used to compare and share the opinions of different experts or authors. You also paraphrase to differentiate between your own thoughts and opinions and those of others. This type of paraphrasing is also essential in academic writing.

Example

ORIGINAL PASSAGE #1:

"I believe in hard work and luck and that the first often leads to the second." J.K. Rowling

ORIGINAL PASSAGE #2:

"The only thing that overcomes hard luck is hard work." —Garry Holden

PARAPHRASED:

J.K. Rowling often reminds writers that success is tied to luck. She believes that "hard work" typically comes first, though. Jewish writer Garry Holden said it another way. He said that to "overcome hard luck," you need to work harder. In my opinion, bad luck can be a good teacher. After losing my first draft of this essay, I learned the importance of saving my work. The second draft was better anyway.

Task 3

Ask two classmates their feelings about "the secret to success." Take notes. Paraphrase their answers below or in your notebook. Add your own opinion.

5 Reasons for Paraphrasing cont.

E. To Avoid Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using another person's words or research and presenting it as your own. When you paraphrase correctly, you use your own words and style and provide credit to the original source.

Reminder:

Many students and writers do not plagiarize on purpose. Accidental plagiarism is still plagiarism. Try taking notes by hand in your own words when you do your research. Do your writing on another day and use your notes instead of the original source.

Example

ORIGINAL PASSAGE:

"When you combine word endings with sentence patterns, the English language makes sense in a whole new way. Students can guess at a word's function, and therefore sentence position, even if they don't yet know the meaning of the word." —Tanya Trusler, ESL Library blog (Oct 6, 2016)

PLAGIARIZED PASSAGE:

If you look at word endings and sentence patterns at the same time, English makes a lot more sense. Students can try to guess the function and sentence position of the words even if they don't know the word meanings.

PARAPHRASED PASSAGE:

Teaching suffixes can help students gain a much better grasp of the language. On her grammar teaching blog, editor Tanya Trusler recommends combining word endings with sentence patterns. This encourages students to predict the function of a word (e.g., noun, verb, adjective) without even knowing the meaning. (Trusler, ESL Library)

Task 4

Answer the following questions based on the example from Part E above.

1. What is the original source?

2. Why is the second excerpt an example of plagiarism?

3. How does the third example differ from the example of plagiarism?

7

Parenthetical Citations

Within an academic piece of writing, you must provide (in-text) parenthetical citations when a thought is not your own (including paraphrased information and any direct quotations).

In-text citations allow the reader to locate the full citation in the reference page at the end of your paper. An in-text citation has very brief information, such as an author's last name and the page number of a book. Occasionally, an in-text citation includes a title or abbreviated title of the source.*

Examples:

1. "Where we come from influences both what we write and how we write" (Goldberg 90).
2. Our origin helps shape "what" and "how" we write (Goldberg 90).
3. Bonni Goldberg, an expert in creative writing, notes that our background influences the content and style of our writing (90).
4. Are you curious about what drives the content and style of your favorite writer? You can start by looking at "where they come from" (Goldberg, *Room to Write*).

***Note:**

Learn how to format and punctuate different types of in-text citations (including electronic sources) and reference pages in our lesson on *How to Cite a Source*.

Task 6

Work with a partner. Discuss the answers to these questions.

1. What is the purpose of an in-text (parenthetical) citation?
Paraphrase the information in your answer.
2. What type of writing is the first example above?
3. Why are the words "what" and "how" in quotations in the second example?
4. Why do you think the format of the parenthetical citation looks a bit different in the paraphrased versions (ex. 2, 3, & 4)?
5. How does the syntax vary in the paraphrased versions?

Reference

USEFUL PHRASES FOR PARAPHRASING

Transitional words and phrases are used in many types of writing, including paraphrasing. They help your writing flow and keep your reader on track. Here are some useful words and phrases to introduce your paraphrased text:

A. Explanation & Clarification

- In other words,
- In short,
- To simplify,
- As I see it,
- To put it another way,
- To begin,
- First,

B. Evidence & Opinions

- According to...
- As _____ notes...
- A recent study by _____ suggests...
- In *article/book name*, *expert* proves that...
- A report about _____ claims that...

Useful Verbs

HE/SHE...

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| • agrees | • maintains |
| • believes | • notes |
| • claims | • observes |
| • demonstrates | • reminds |
| • ensures | • reports |
| • emphasizes | • says |
| • insists | • states |
| • informs | • suggests |

C. Analysis & Examples

- It has been demonstrated that
- As mentioned,
- As has been noted,
- Given that...
- Granted that...
- Again,
- For example,
- For instance,
- To give an example/illustration,

Comprehension Check-In

Work with a partner and answer the following questions based on the lesson so far.

1. What part of speech is the word “paraphrase”?
2. How is paraphrasing different from quoting and summarizing?
3. What five reasons for paraphrasing in writing are given in the lesson?
4. What is a good way to avoid accidental plagiarism?
5. What should writers use to provide a reference to an original source within a body of academic text?
6. What is “shared language”?

A Checklist

PARAPHRASING

- ☐ Did I take notes in my own words?
- ☐ Did I leave some time between reading/researching and writing?
- ☐ Did I note any original sources to use on my reference page?
- ☐ Did I change the wording and syntax when paraphrasing?
- ☐ Did I use quotation marks when borrowing exact wording from an original source?
- ☐ Did I provide parenthetical citation for anything that is not common knowledge?
- ☐ Did I use transitional words and phrases to help my writing flow?

Writing Challenge

PARAPHRASING

1. Choose a news article to work with. Cut or print it out.
2. Choose an excerpt to work with within the article (approximately one paragraph with no more than five sentences). Highlight it.
3. Take notes on the excerpt in your own words.
4. Note the source and the author.
5. Imagine you know nothing about paraphrasing. Plagiarize the excerpt. Really! Make a few small changes and use the title "Paraphrase #1 (Plagiarism)" at the top.
6. Now, paraphrase the text correctly. Use a few ideas from pages 3 and 9. Write "Paraphrase #2" at the top of this writing.
7. Get an envelope. Seal the original article in an envelope with "Paraphrase #1 and #2." Write your name on the envelope, and give it to your teacher.
8. A day later (or for homework) paraphrase the original text a third time using only your reading notes. Write "Paraphrase #3" at the top. Hand it to your teacher.

For Fun

After your teacher hands back your writing, cut off the titles. Ask a partner to check all three. Can he/she figure out which version is which? Was there any accidental plagiarism in #2 and #3?

Writing Assessment Tool

Student: _____

Date	Level	Assessed By	Target Task	Skills
		<input type="checkbox"/> Self <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher	Paraphrasing	Reading, Writing

Criteria	Rating	Notes
follows instructions properly		
comprehends what plagiarism is		
shows evidence of effective note-taking		
paraphrases effectively using a variety of methods		