

# Paraphrasing

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A **paraphrase**, or an **indirect quotation**, is a rewording of an author's text, explanation, argument, or narrative. When cited correctly, paraphrasing is a legitimate way to borrow from a source to restate its essential ideas and information. As opposed to **summarizing** (briefly overviewing the main points of a passage) or **directly quoting** (reproducing a passage word for word), paraphrasing conveys the same information as a given passage but uses your own words.

## Key Aspects of a Paraphrase

There are some key components to a proper paraphrase.

- **Citation of the original source:** If you do not properly cite the original source of your paraphrased material, it is considered plagiarism because you are presenting the material as your own.
- **Significant changes to the original source:** A proper paraphrase must feature significant structural changes to the original source, not simply minor adjustments such as switching out a handful of key words for synonyms.

### *Sample Paraphrase*

**Original:** “When the sun was shining, geographical north could be determined with a special sundial. However, how the Vikings could have navigated in cloudy or foggy situations, when the Sun's disc was unusable, is still not fully known” (Horváth et al., 2011).

**Paraphrase:** The Vikings could find geographical north using a sundial on sunny days, but scholars are still uncertain about how they were able to navigate when the sun was obscured (Horváth et al., 2011).

## Tips for Paraphrasing

Try using some of the following techniques when paraphrasing.

- **Read and reread the original document for comprehension:** Be sure that you fully understand the source document. Fully grasping the source material will make it easier for you to put those ideas in your own words.
- **Identify key components of the original passage:** Ask yourself who, what, when, where, why, and how questions to determine the critical components of the passage. Why is this information important? Be sure to include this information in your paraphrase.

- **Set the original document aside while generating your paraphrase:** If you are unable to look at the original passage, it will be much easier to use your own words.
- **Try changing the sentence structure as well as specific words:** Restructuring the original passage is an easy way to avoid plagiarism because you will necessarily make fundamental changes to the original source.
- **Always cite your source(s):** Whether paraphrasing or directly quoting a document, make sure to cite the original, both to avoid plagiarism and to give credit where it is due.

Additionally, you should take certain measures to avoid creating an unacceptable paraphrase.

- **Do *not* keep the same structure as the original document, only making minor changes in specific vocabulary:** Merely making surface-level changes to the original document both displays laziness in the author and also constitutes plagiarism.
- **Do *not* distort the meaning of the original document through a poor choice of synonyms or a misleading message:** Creating an inaccurate paraphrase signals to the reader that the author failed to understand the original document.
- **Do *not* change the facts presented in the original document:** Altering the facts of the original document not only shows a failure to comprehend that document, but it also misrepresents an author's claims.

*Thank You!*