Paraphrasing and Summarising

Paraphrasing
This section will help you to get on top of paraphrasing by examining what, why and how to paraphrase.

What is paraphrasing?
Paraphrasing is not producing a direct copy of another persons’ ideas or work.

Paraphrasing is re-writing another person’s words so that the original meaning of their idea is maintained, but the structure and words you use are quite different to theirs.

Paraphrasing is?
When you paraphrase, the words and structures you use should sound like something you would normally say or write.

Therefore, paraphrasing is...

- Presenting the ideas and information of others in your own voice.
- Not necessarily presenting the original text in an elaborate way, but in a way that flows with your expression.
- If you want to write very closely to the original text, then you may need to consider whether it’s worthy of a direct quote – or if you have to work more at expressing it in your own voice.

Where paraphrasing fits into the Bigger Picture
Paraphrasing occurs while appropriating information from the texts that you read, processing and filtering that information through your own perspective, and then incorporating that information into your own writing. The following Writing from sources diagram explains this in further detail.
How to paraphrase – step by step sample: An extract from your research notes

So how do you paraphrase? The following activity examines unacceptable and acceptable forms of paraphrasing. Begin by carefully reading the following extract...

“Many membrane peptides and proteins exhibit potent antimicrobial and antibacterial activities. They achieve this function by rupturing the cell membranes of the target organism. Antimicrobial peptides are produced by many animals, including humans, as an innate immune response against bacteria, fungi, and virus. The membrane-bound structure of the peptides gives insights into how they destroy the membrane. For example, a peptide bound to the surface of the lipid bilayer most likely destroys the membrane by micellization, while a peptide inserted into the bilayer probably kills the cell by forming pores.” (Hong 2006, 1)

Next, make little notes on different sections of the extract, stating what each part is doing. This step is quite useful when you are trying to paraphrase very dense or complex academic language.

“Many membrane peptides and proteins exhibit potent antimicrobial and antibacterial activities. They achieve this function by rupturing the cell membranes of the target organism. Antimicrobial peptides are produced by many animals, including humans, as an innate immune response against bacteria, fungi, and virus. The membrane-bound structure of the peptides gives insights into how they destroy the membrane. For example, a peptide bound to the surface of the lipid bilayer most likely destroys the membrane by micellization, while a peptide inserted into the bilayer probably kills the cell by forming pores.” (Hong 2006, 1)

Now examine paraphrase number one below. Do you think it is acceptable? Why/why not?

Membrane peptides and proteins have strong antimicrobial and antibacterial activities. They do this by breaking apart the cell membranes of the target organism. Antimicrobial peptides arise from many animals, including humans, as a natural immune response against bacteria, fungi, and virus. The membrane-bound structure of the peptides suggests how they destroy the membrane. A peptide bound to the surface of the lipid bilayer most likely destroys the membrane by micellization, while a peptide inserted into the bilayer probably kills the cell by forming pores.

Paraphrase number one is not acceptable and would be considered to be plagiarism.

Some words have been changed in the original, but the sentence structure and order of ideas remains the same as the original. The last sentence is a direct quotation from the original, but the author has not been acknowledged. No reference has been given for the extract as a whole piece of work either.
Now examine **paraphrase number two** below. Is this acceptable?

Membrane peptides and proteins have strong antimicrobial and antibacterial activities. They **do this by breaking apart** the cell membranes of the target organism. Antimicrobial peptides **arise from** many animals, including humans, as a **natural** immune response against bacteria, fungi, and virus. The membrane-bound structure of the peptides **suggests** how they destroy the membrane. “A peptide bound to the surface of the lipid bilayer most likely destroys the membrane by micellization, while a peptide inserted into the bilayer probably kills the cell by forming pores” (Hong 2006, 1).

**Paraphrase number two** is a slight improvement on number one, but it is **still an example of plagiarism** and, therefore, is **still not acceptable**.

Some words have been changed, and the last sentence is quoted and acknowledged. But the sentence structure and order of ideas remains the same and referencing has not been provided for the entire paragraph.

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Read **paraphrase number three** carefully. Is it plagiarism?

Humans have “an innate immune response” (Hong, 2006, 1), which involves the production of antimicrobial peptides. One important function of membrane peptides and proteins is the ability to protect against bacteria, fungi and virus. Although the mechanism is uncertain, a harmful organism is likely destroyed through a process of micellization, followed by pores being formed through interaction with the peptide into the lipid bilayer (Hong 2006, 1).

Although the key ideas of the original are still there (as indicated above), and the terminology is used correctly, the sentence structure and the **approach to each idea** has changed. Both the quote and the passage as a whole have been acknowledged. **Paraphrase number three is an acceptable, and is not plagiarism.**

You would also need to provide a **complete reference** for this work in your bibliography.
Another example of paraphrasing

Compare these two examples of writing. Note down similarities and differences between the two. What has been changed? What remained the same?

Original:
Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes.

Paraphrase:
In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level, or less than 10% of the paper. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim.


Try it yourself! A paraphrasing exercise

Test out your paraphrasing skills.

Begin by carefully reading the following passage.

“There has been a dramatic increase in the number of Australian children taking an interest in cooking in the last two years. Researchers speculate that this may be due to the rising popularity of reality based television cooking shows aimed at a young audience. These shows often feature children who are very skilled at preparing, cooking and presenting food. The shows present the idea that the levels of skill such children possess in the kitchen can be reached by any child, as long as they are determined and have family support. Cooking products and games have also started to line the shelves of toy stores. These products are frequently packaged so as to reinforce their links to the popular television shows and the promise of success and celebrity status such shows confer upon the child who cooks.” (McGuinness, 15, 2011)

After you have read the above passage, do the following:

- Write down just three key words.
- Cover the page and look away.
- Write your own version of what you just read, using just the three words as a guide. In your version, try to use a different structure or ordering of ideas within sentences and in the piece as a whole.
- Look back at the passage and check it against your version.

In this last exercise, did you:

- Cover the main ideas?
- Were most of the words your own?
- Was the order or structure of your passage different to the one above?

If you did all of these things, (and you remember to always reference the original correctly) then you have paraphrased successfully! You can try this exercise in your own reading and research.
Paraphrasing is NOT...

When paraphrasing make sure you do not just swap a few words or sentences here and there. The whole structure of the passage you are paraphrasing needs to change.

Hence, paraphrasing is not...

- Just changing words from the original
- Keeping identical sentence structure
- Transferring ideas sentence per sentence.

Note!

Always keep in mind what you are paraphrasing and why.

How does the point relate to your assignment as a whole? Always thinking about this will help you decide what to paraphrase, what to quote directly and what to leave out.

What you choose to paraphrase from the original is CLOSELY related to your assignment argument.

Remember WHY you are taking these ideas and information from the original text – to support your main idea – your argument.

Why paraphrase? Why not just use direct quotations?

Why not just use direct quotations? Paraphrasing is more difficult, so why bother to do it?

Research has demonstrated that students overuse quotations in their research papers. Learning to paraphrase will demonstrate that you have absorbed the ideas of others, but have also thought carefully about what they mean.

“Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes.”


Paraphrasing is not summarising

Paraphrasing is not summarising. Summarising is when you give an overview of the author’s key ideas as a whole, or provide an overview of a topic.

A summary is usually shorter than the original piece of writing. It might state the ideas of a paragraph in one simple sentence.

A summary tells you about the whole passage.

For example:

Original:
Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes.

Summary:
Students should take just a few notes in direct quotation from sources to help minimize the amount of quoted material in a research paper (Lester 1976, 46-47).

**Why paraphrase?**

When you paraphrase you need to think about another person’s words and how/why they relate to your thesis statement.

If you paraphrase well, you will not only demonstrate that you have understood the original content to your lecturer or professor, you will also be demonstrating that you know how it relates to your ideas. Also...

- You might be excited to find evidence to support your argument – Thesis Statement
- Your lecturer, however, is excited to see that you have understood the evidence you use to support your viewpoint.
- Good paraphrasing shows this understanding!

**Quoting - when to quote rather than paraphrase**

Sometimes it is better to quote directly rather than paraphrase.

Quoting is useful when you feel the author’s exact words really support your argument. Or if you feel their words make a point in a particularly striking or memorable way. But remember that if you overuse quotations from a source, that author’s words will lose their power.

Quoting directly can be used when...

- You want to add the power of an author’s words to support your argument
- You want to disagree with an author’s argument
- You are comparing and contrasting specific points of view
- You want to highlight particularly powerful or effective phrases.

**When to paraphrase (most of the time!)**

Try to paraphrase much more frequently than quoting directly from a source. This will build up your thinking and processing of the topic, as you will not just be copying words down automatically.

When to paraphrase (most of the time):

- You want to use your own “voice” to present information
- You want to incorporate the author’s ideas into your own writing
- You want to avoid over-quotation!

Don’t forget to always reference your work – both within the essay or paper and at the end of it in the form of a bibliography.

Always remember to reference – in-text and end-list.

**When to summarise**

Summarise when you want to write about the background of a topic, or to give a quick overview of its history. You should also summarise when you want to bring together several researchers’ ideas about a topic.

Hence, summarise when...

- You want to establish the background to a topic
- You want to offer an overview of a topic
- You want to describe common knowledge from several sources about a topic
- You want to communicate the main ideas of a single source.

Again, always remember to reference – in-text and end-list.
Practise distinguishing between quotes, paraphrases and summaries

It is important that you can easily distinguish between a quotation, a paraphrase and a summary. The following exercises will allow you to practice that skill.

Practice activity

Test your ability to distinguish between a quotation, a paraphrase and a summary. Begin by reading this extract.

**Extract:**
Alexander Graham Bell is the man credited with inventing the telephone. He was born in Scotland in 1847, but later moved to Canada, where he taught deaf people. His invention was based on his discovery that sound waves could travel through wire; once electricity was added to his listening contraption it was possible to extend the distances that the sound waves could be sent. He registered his invention in 1876, thereby, ensuring his position in history as the man who invented the telephone.

Now **compare these three statements to the previous extract.**

1. Alexander Graham Bell ... was born in Scotland in 1847, but later moved to Canada.
2. Alexander Graham Bell, who was born in Scotland in 1847 but later moved to Canada, invented the telephone after combining electricity with his discovery that sound waves can travel through wire. His invention was registered in 1876.
3. Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone by making an appliance that permitted sound waves to travel through wire via an electric current.

Which one is a direct quotation? Which one is a paraphrase? Which one is a summary?

**Answers:**

**Statement 1 is a quotation,** as it uses the exact words and word order found in the original extract. Normally, when quoting, you would also include quotation marks at the beginning and end of the quote.

**Statement 2 is a summary.** It provides an overview of the main ideas in the extract as a whole.

**Statement 3 is a paraphrase.** It covers the main ideas of the extract, but presents them in new way, using different word order and a different organisation of the order of the ideas.

You would need to reference all three of these in your own writing.
Linking paraphrases, quotations and summaries to your own ideas

This next section will examine how you link:

- paraphrases,
- quotations, and
- summaries

to your own ideas smoothly and effectively in your writing.

How do you link the ideas of others to your words?

Once you have completed your quotation, summary or paraphrase, how do you link the ideas of others to your ideas?

There are two ways in which to do this. They are called:

- the **authorial prominent** link, and
- the **information prominent** link.

**Authorial prominent**

As the name implies, the author stands out!

Use the authorial prominent style to link your ideas to another person’s when the author is a leader in your field, saying something quite different to other people on the subject or offering a contrasting view to others.

When using the authorial prominent linking style place the author’s name near the beginning of your sentence. Make sure you reference their work correctly as well.

In the example above the date of the relevant work is placed after each name, though referencing styles may differ according to the system you are using.

Although Parsons (1981) strongly promotes methods of classroom discipline, Johnson (2008) gives clear evidence that “constructively managed controversy” has a positive effect on the learning that takes place in the classroom.

**Information prominent**

Use the information prominent style most of the time in your writing. It is particularly useful when you are using more than one source of evidence.

When using this style, put the quote or paraphrase first and then place the author’s name at the end of the sentence.

Don’t forget to include page numbers when you quote and when you paraphrase.

**For example:**

Stereotyping can lead to patronising, sexist labelling (Kaye 1994; Williams 2009).

(note: For some referencing styles, you need to put the page number, if available, for paraphrase— not just for quotations: check your referencing style guide for this.)
When citing sources, you can…

- There are many different ways to make connections between your idea and the ideas of others. These include:
- Stating the view of another, by using words like ‘According to …’
- Talking about the view of another when there is a bit of confusion about that view: ‘Smith’s claim seems…’
- Agreeing with the view of another by saying ‘As (the author) says…’
- Disagreeing with the view of another. To do this you can use words like ‘In contrast to…’
- Drawing a conclusion using the work of another. Here you mention their work: ‘From Carlson’s conclusion…’ and then add ‘it can be argued…’
- Point out assumptions by beginning sentences like this: The assumption on which this depends…
- And finally, to state your own position by saying things like: ‘The perspective presented here is…’

(note: You must always put the year of publication in brackets next to the author’s name)

Have a closer look at your literature readings – note how authors move to and from a citation

Look at your literature readings to see how other writers include citations in their work.

Examine this extract:

The key to success with diverse students is finding ways to provide them with the amounts and forms of instruction that they need in order to succeed in mastering the curriculum. Shepard (1991) articulated a theoretical perspective for planning appropriate instruction for diverse student populations: recognise that intelligence and reasoning are developed ability and learning-to-learn strategies are largely context specific, and that learning is a constructive process.

(Adapted from Good & Brophy 2000, Looking in Classrooms. 337).

Choosing verb tense when you connect ideas is also important - Present or Past

Choosing the correct verb tense for words linking your ideas to others’ is also important. Most of the time, you should use the present tense for any verbs that link your work. The present tense makes your argument stronger and more direct, as seen in these examples.

Examples:

- Multicultural experiences, although initially challenging, enrich lifelong learning (Gregson, 2010).
- Patterson (1971) demonstrates that rote learning has a crucial role when combined with other forms of learning.

However, choose the past tense when ...

There are some situations where you should choose the past tense for any linking verbs. These include situations where you are writing about something that happened in the past, where you disagree with the author or where an author’s view is unusual or not commonly held.

- Writing about a phenomena (something that happened)
- You disagree with the author;
- When it’s a ‘one-off’ finding and not in accord with most accepted other viewpoints.

For example:

- Although Ausubel (1964) stated that learning via memorisation is an exercise that brings about little learning, Patterson (1971) claims that rote learning has a crucial role when combined with other forms of learning.
Finally – other useful sites!

Finally, when working on your paraphrasing, quoting and summarising skills, you may also find the following websites handy.

**Academic Integrity at Curtin:**


**Endnote:**

Does the mechanics of referencing for you!

[http://libguides.library.curtin.edu.au/](http://libguides.library.curtin.edu.au/)