

# Write it in Your Own Words: PARAPHRASE

Brought to you by the Purdue University On-Line Writing Lab

---

Learn to borrow from a source without plagiarizing.

## A PARAPHRASE IS:

- your own rendition of essential information and ideas expressed by someone else, presented in a new form
- one legitimate way, when accompanied by accurate documentation, to borrow from a source
- a more detailed restatement than a summary, which focuses concisely on a single main idea

## PARAPHRASING IS A VALUABLE SKILL BECAUSE -

- it is better than quoting information from an undistinguished passage
- it helps you control the temptation to quote too much
- the mental process required for successful paraphrasing helps you to grasp the full meaning of the original

## HOW TO PARAPHRASE EFFECTIVELY (6 STEPS TO FOLLOW)

1. Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning.
2. Set the original aside; write your paraphrase on a note card.
3. Jot down a few words below your paraphrase to remind you later how you envision using this material. At the top of the note card, write a key word or phrase to indicate the subject of your paraphrase.
4. Check your rendition with the original to make sure that your version accurately expresses all the essential information in a new form.
5. Use quotation marks to identify any unique term or phraseology you have borrowed exactly from the source.
6. Record the source (including the page) on your note card so that you can credit it easily if you decide to incorporate the material into your paper.

## Some examples to compare

The original passage:

*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.* Lester, James D. *Writing Research Papers*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1976): 46-47.

A legitimate paraphrase:

*In research papers, students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim*

An acceptable 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.*

A plagiarized version:

*Students often use too many direct quotations when they take notes, resulting in too many of them in the final research paper. In fact, probably only about 10% of the final copy should consist of directly quoted material. So it is important to limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes.*

---

Copyright © 1995 by Purdue University. All rights reserved.

This document may be distributed as long as it is done entirely with all attributions to organizations and authors. Commercial distribution is strictly prohibited. Portions of this document may be copyrighted by other organizations.

This document is part of a collection of instructional materials used in the Purdue University Writing Lab. The online version is part of OWL (On-Line Writing Lab), a project of the Purdue University Writing Lab, funded by the School of Liberal Arts at Purdue.

OWL is an e-mail server ([owl\(Q\)sa~e.cc.purdue.edu](mailto:owl(Q)sa~e.cc.purdue.edu)), a gopher site ([pwl.trc.purdue.edu](http://pwl.trc.purdue.edu)), an anonymous FTP archive (at [owl.trc.purdue.edu](http://owl.trc.purdue.edu)), and a World Wide Web site (<http://owl.trc.purdue.edu/>).