

Script for Paraphrasing I: *The Basics – What it is and why we use it*

SLIDE 1 – title page

This is tutorial to help you understand paraphrasing--a skill you will need to use to write throughout your university education and beyond. It should give you an idea about the importance of paraphrasing in academic writing at the university level and some of the issues to consider while paraphrasing.

Can we use someone else's ideas in our writing? Can we use someone else's words in our writing? Yes, of course we can. How we do these things is the important issue. We can quote directly from other sources, copying the exact words into our text, if we use appropriate quotation marks and references. We can summarize others' words and ideas, again if we use appropriate referencing.

Paraphrasing is another way to use sources. In fact, it might be the most frequent way that you use sources while in university. We want you to understand how to paraphrasing appropriately so you use the sources properly as well as avoid the appearance of improper source use and leave yourself open to being accused of plagiarism.

Slide 2 - Overview

In this tutorial we will define paraphrasing, consider why we might paraphrase, and briefly look at various methods of paraphrasing, changing some of the words and some of the sentence structure, making sure we understand the difference between it and summarizing.

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So what is paraphrasing? Here is a dictionary definition:

Notice the repetition of the word "rewording" in this definition. This helps us understand that when we paraphrase we are taking someone else's words and restating them or rewording them in our own words and in our own way.

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Here are a couple of other definitions (written by people who teach writing).

One writer calls paraphrasing an "ART" which implies that it is something that takes time to develop and also that it may not look exactly the same from one person to another. The other writers emphasize the representative nature of paraphrasing. What is our paraphrasing suppose to represent then? Both refer to something original. We are taking something that is not ours, something that is originally someone else's, and we are representing what they have written in a faithful and careful manner.

But why are we restating or rewording or representing someone else's words?

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You might use paraphrasing for a number of reasons including changing difficult words or a passage. Sometimes technical or specialized language (what we call jargon) might be beyond our readers (or even us) and we change the words accordingly.

A primary goal of good writing is to be clear; we might change the language to make things clearer and more understandable for the reader. You may also paraphrase because of some restriction such as not being able to use quotations or simply because you do not want to use quotations or to add variety to your source use.

Paraphrasing is often thought of as primarily a writing skill; in fact, paraphrasing tests not only your writing but firstly your reading skills. It shows your understanding of the material you have been reading-- to your reader to be sure but also to yourself. Because it tests both your reading and writing skills, there is nothing like trying to paraphrase a passage to reveal the level of your understanding.

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Regardless of the reason, when we paraphrase we are taking knowledge, information, the words of others, or the ideas of others and rewording them. But the goal is not simply rewording or restating for its own sake. But rather paraphrasing is one of ways we integrate this knowledge, this information or others' ideas into our own writing --most often to support our own ideas.

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In the decision to and activity of paraphrasing, it is also important to understand the differences between Paraphrasing and Summarizing. The primary difference between the two is that while summarizing generally condenses large passages and gives the readers the main ideas in a brief space, paraphrases attempt to capture the full meaning – all the details are the focus –not necessarily specific words. Thus, while summarizing is always shorter than the original, paraphrasing can be as long or longer than the original in its desire to include all the details. This will generally mean although you might summarize a large amount of material, you will only paraphrase a small amount of writing, usually only a sentence or two and seldom if ever more than a paragraph.

Therefore, it is important that you carefully read the passage that you will paraphrase and fully understand the meaning of the text. When we summarize, we sometimes can get away with less than a full understanding; this is not the case in paraphrasing. To paraphrase correctly you will need to fully understand the material you've chosen to Paraphrase. (And don't do what some do in an attempt to cover up their lack of understanding. They paraphrase what they do understand and then they just copy, without using quotation marks, the parts they do not understand. Their hope is, I suspect, that it will all make sense in the end to the reader. It may not and it could get you accused of plagiarizing.)

Slide 8 This is the end of Paraphrasing 1 the Basics. If you want to know what you need to paraphrase appropriately, some methods you can use to paraphrase effectively, (Slide 9) and the main principles of paraphrasing correctly, please listen and watch Paraphrasing 2.