

Paraphrasing Another Text

Here you can learn the basics of

- **paraphrasing someone else's text.**

An associated [worksheet](#) is also available.

General Information

Paraphrasing (repeating text from another paper in your own words) is essential when writing about research. A paraphrase can be longer or shorter than the original text. If you don't paraphrase another text, you must use direct quotes/quotation marks. You must cite a source for both paraphrases and quotes. Paraphrasing is closely related to plagiarism (not quoting the source of a piece of information/fact). Below are several paraphrasing methods.

Basic Methods

1. Look away from the original text
 - Read the text several times; look away from the original; rewrite the text in your own words.
2. Take notes
 - Take abbreviated notes; set the notes aside; paraphrase from the notes later.

More Specific Methods

1. Change the sentence structure
 - Start at a different part of the text depending on the focus (see example below).
 - Break up long sentences, combine short sentences, expand or shorten phrases (see example below).
2. Change the words
 - Change the subject of a sentence (see example below).
 - Use synonyms/antonyms (see example below).
 - Replace a noun with a verb (see example below).
 - Use singular instead of plural or specific instead of general (see example below).
 - Move modifiers (see example below).
 - Replace passive voice with active voice or vice versa (*The participants were instructed by the researcher = The researcher instructed the participants*).

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- Change numbers to percentages or vice versa (*More than half* = *Over 50%*).
- Use different connecting words/phrases (*In contrast* = *Conversely*).
- Use a different definition structure (*Lyme disease is an inflammatory disease caused by a bacterium transmitted by ticks* = *Lyme disease, a bacterial infection causing swelling and redness, is spread by ticks*).

Example

Original: *“The last sentence of the opening paragraph will articulate the nature of the focus of the whole article. This is probably the strongest reader expectation in English” Gopen, 2004.*

Paraphrase: *According to Gopen (2004), a reader of an English academic article expects the article’s general topic to appear at the end of the first paragraph.*

Gopen, G. D. 2004. Expectations, Teaching writing from the Reader’s Perspective. Pearson.

Changes

- subject changed (from *sentence* to *reader*)
- a noun (*expectation*) changed to a verb (*expects*)
- a term shortened and re-worded (*the nature of the focus* to *general topic*)
- a synonym used (*opening* changed to *first*)
- a specific word (*the*) changed to the more general *an*
- a modifier (*in English*) moved and rephrased
- an “*of*” phrase (*of the whole article*) changed to a genitive “*s*” and
- two sentences combined to one.

Useful Resources

Wallwork, A. 2011. *English for Writing Research Papers*. Springer.

<https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/writing/sources/techniques-paraphrasing>

Final Comments/Tips

- Using more than one paraphrasing method reduces the likelihood you will be accused of plagiarism.
- If you have previously published your research or made it available online, you have to paraphrase your own text, otherwise you are self-plagiarising.

