

Avoiding Plagiarism: Paraphrasing and Quoting

1. Paraphrasing, Summarizing, and Quoting

- a. Summarizing is used to express the main idea of a written work.
- b. Paraphrasing is used when it's important to convey every idea in the original writing. It does not use the author's words and structure.
- c. Quoting is used when the writer's exact words are important because they are well-known or historically significant, or because they express a concept in a unique or noteworthy way, such as

2. Choose paraphrasing rather than quoting because:

- a. Your paraphrase demonstrates that you understand the text
- b. You can make challenging material easier to understand
- c. You can smoothly integrate a paraphrase into a paper you're writing by using the same style, structure, and organization
- d. A direct quotation may have details you don't want to include in your paper
- e. American academic practice strongly values using your own words and discourages using quotations

3. The basics of paraphrasing

- a. Use your own words to express the concepts of the original text
- b. Use your own sentence structure and organization, not the author's
- c. Provide attribution in correct citation form for the text you paraphrase

4. How to paraphrase

- a. **Read** the portion of text you want to paraphrase
- b. Make sure you **understand** it
- c. After you've read the text, **make notes** of what you read, without using the original words or structure
- d. Using only your notes, **write** all of the important ideas of the text using own words
- e. **Compare** your paraphrase with the original text to be sure you've
 - i. included all of the ideas in the text
 - ii. stated those ideas accurately
- f. **Review and revise** your passage for grammar and spelling errors
- g. Provide a citation for your paraphrase in correct MLA format

The following definition of plagiarism is taken from H. Martin and R. Ohmann's The Logic and Rhetoric of Exposition, revised edition, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.

“The academic counterpart of the bank embezzler and of the manufacturer who mislabels products is the plagiarist, the student or scholar who leads readers to believe that what they are reading is the original work of the writer when it is not. If it could be assumed that the distinction between plagiarism and honest use of sources is perfectly clear in everyone’s mind, there would be no need for the explanation that follows; merely the warning with which this definition concludes would be enough. But it is apparent that sometimes people of goodwill draw the suspicion of guilt upon themselves (and, indeed, are guilty) simply because they are not aware of the illegitimacy of certain kinds of "borrowing" and of the procedures for correct identification of materials other than those gained through independent research and reflection. . . .

“The spectrum is a wide one. At one end there is a word-for-word copying of another’s writing without enclosing the copied passage in quotation marks and identifying it in a footnote, both of which are necessary. (This includes, of course, the copying of all or any part of another student’s paper.) It hardly seems possible that anyone of college age or more could do that without clear intent to deceive. At the other end there is the almost casual slipping in of a particularly apt term which one has come across in reading and which so admirably expresses one’s opinion that one is tempted to make it personal property. Between these poles there are degrees and degrees, but they may be roughly placed in two groups. Close to outright and blatant deceit -- but more the result, perhaps, of laziness than of bad intent -- is the patching together of random jottings made in the course of reading, generally without careful identification of their source, and then woven into the text, so that the result is a mosaic of other people’s ideas and words, the writer’s sole contribution being the cement to hold the pieces together. Indicative of more effort and, for that reason, somewhat closer to honest, though still dishonest, is the paraphrase, an abbreviated (and often skillfully prepared) restatement of someone else’s analysis or conclusion, without acknowledgment that another person’s text has been the basis for the recapitulation.”