

# A Guide to Paraphrasing Correctly



## Actively Read the Source Material

- ☑ Read entire sections, not individual sentences, searching for the author's main ideas.
- ☑ Take notes as you read instead of simply highlighting or underlining information.



## Look away and think about the Source Material

- ☑ The easiest way to fall into plagiarism is to look at the source while you are attempting to paraphrase.
- ☑ Once you finish a section, put the source material aside.
- ☑ As you read through your notes on the section, think about the information. What was main point the author was trying to communicate? What are the implications or applications of the information? Are there instances when the information does not apply?
- ☑ The more you understand the author's main idea and how that applies to specific situations, the easier it will be to communicate the idea in your own words. You cannot effectively paraphrase information you have not fully integrated into your own thoughts.



## Communicate the Main Idea in Your Own Words

- ☑ Put the main idea of the source into your own words. Don't focus on individual words or sentences from the source, but focus on the overall point the author is making in the section you just read.
- ☑ Never paraphrase sentence by sentence. This method often leads to synonym swapping and, consequently, plagiarism.
- ☑ If this step is difficult, try talking aloud as if you are explaining the idea to a friend. Then, write down what you say.



## Compare the Source Material to Your Own Paraphrase

- ☑ Compare your paraphrase to the original. If you can match idea for idea or phrase for phrase, then you need to retry. When paraphrasing, you can inadvertently plagiarize if you simply swap out words or phrases for synonyms.
- ☑ If you notice only key words or terms that appear in both, set those key words or terms off with quotation marks (or italics depending on the style manual\*).

\*For instructions on using single words or short phrases with either quotation marks or italics, see pages 311–312 in Turabian, 91–92 in APA, and 93 in MLA.

# Plagiarizing versus Paraphrasing

## Original:

"You paraphrase appropriately when you represent an idea in your own words more clearly or pointedly than the source does. But readers will think that you cross the line from fair paraphrase to plagiarism if they can match your words and phrasing with those of your source."<sup>1</sup>

## Plagiarism:

Booth, Colomb, and Williams claim that appropriate paraphrase is the use of one's own words to represent an idea to make a passage from a source clear or more pointed. Readers can accuse a student of plagiarism, however, if his paraphrase is so similar to its source that someone can match words and phrases in the sentence with those in that source.<sup>2</sup>

## Borderline Plagiarism:

Appropriate paraphrase rewrites a passage from a source into one's own words to make it clearer or more pointed. Readers think plagiarism occurs when a source is paraphrased so closely that they see parallels between words and phrases.<sup>3</sup>

## Correct Paraphrase:

Booth, Colomb, and Williams believe authors paraphrase fairly when they eliminate word for word correspondences and rephrase the source's idea in a clear, concise, and unique fashion.<sup>4</sup>

## Explanation:

The Plagiarism and Borderline Plagiarism examples constitute plagiarism due to similar words and phrasing as well as idea by idea parallelism. Using the sentence by sentence method for paraphrasing, the author swapped out phrases or words with similar ones, removed a few inconsequential phrases, but kept all the ideas chronologically consistent.

In contrast, the Correct Paraphrase example is more clear and concise because the author did not use the sentence by sentence paraphrasing method. Instead, the author concentrated on the main idea of the original source.

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<sup>1</sup> Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013), 80.

<sup>2</sup> This example is word-for-word from Turabian, 80. Quotation marks were not used in order to maintain the clarity of the example.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Turabian, 80.