

## PARAPHRASING

Look at the first four lines of the poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay:

**Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink  
Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain;  
Nor yet a floating spar to men that sink  
And rise and sink and rise and sink again;**

Try to restate what they say in your own words:

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As an academic writer this is now your opportunity to make ample use of this technique. In taking notes from the texts that you are studying you will come across really salient passages. You regard them as very important, and you wish to record them. If you paraphrase these sentences you will, firstly test your own understanding, and, secondly, have a valuable piece of evidence ready for an argument that you may conduct in your essay. You need to have made a "vocabulary shift" in order to be able to do this, though. The more suitable words you know, the better you will be able to "translate" from the author's language to your own.

If you plan to borrow from a source without plagiarizing, you can paraphrase a short extract from a text:

### **A paraphrase is:**

- You 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.

### **Six steps to effective paraphrasing**

- 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 word 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 you 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 you 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

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.

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.

**A second example**

The original passage:

It is also believed that audiences are captivated by variety and repelled by complexity, which is why, during a typical thirty-minute show, there will be between fifteen and twenty "stories". Discounting time for commercials, promos for stories to come, and news readers' banter, this works out to an average of sixty seconds a story.

A plagiarized version:

Because it is believed that audiences like variety and dislike complexity, a typical thirty-minute show has between fifteen and twenty "stories". When you discount time for commercials, promos and banter, this works out to about sixty seconds a story.

A legitimate paraphrase:

A typical one-half hour new programme covers 15 to 20 "stories". This means that each event gets covered in about sixty seconds - when commercials and announcements of what's coming are excluded. Apparently this is done because of the belief that viewers prefer brief coverage of many new items.

Try to paraphrase the following paragraph:

The skills we have in mind are generally known as "note-taking" skills. A vital part of writing preparation is to write small chunks, packaging or capturing the main points of the texts that you have read thematically. If you use the opportunity to *practise-write* while you are reading, you will reap the benefits later. Usually students make some notes while they are reading. These consist of bibliographic notes that record source details, such as the author and the title. They also record direct quotations from the text. There are, however, other ways of capturing the themes of the texts that you use for research. You can write memos, paraphrases and also definitions. Let us look into some of these.

### **A note on plagiarism**

It takes novice research writers time to get used to the fact that they should acknowledge the source of their information, which is then interpreted and integrated with other sources and with prior knowledge to become the very knowledge that they are going to use to form their own opinions and viewpoints. To pass off ideas, opinions or facts that you have found in sources as if they were your own is plagiarism - a form of theft. Booth et al (1995:67) explain plagiarism so well that they define plagiarism as follows:

You plagiarise when, intentionally or not, you use someone else's words or ideas but fail to credit that person. You plagiarise even when you do credit the author but use his exact words without so indicating with quotation marks or block indentation. You also plagiarise when you use words so close to those in your source, that if you placed your work next to the source, you would see that you could not have written what you did without the source at your elbow.

Therefore, copying someone's exact words without acknowledgement is plagiarism. Copying someone's words with some changes without acknowledgement is plagiarism. Rewriting or summarising someone's thoughts and ideas entirely in your own words without acknowledgement is plagiarism. Using even one phrase, one line or one idea without acknowledgement is plagiarism.