Paraphrase: Write it in Your Own Words

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Learn to borrow from a source without plagiarizing. For more information on paraphrasing, as well as other ways to integrate sources into your paper, see the Purdue OWL handout Quoting Paraphrasing, and Summarizing at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_quotprsum.html. For more information about writing research papers, see our workshop on this subject at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/index.html. Purdue students will want to make sure that they are familiar with Purdue's official academic dishonesty policy (http://www.purdue.edu/odos/administration/integrity.htm) as well as any additional policies that their instructor has implemented. Another good resource for understanding plagiarism is the WPA Statement on Plagiarism (http://www.ilstu.edu/~ddhesse/wpa/positions/WPAplagiarism.pdf).

A paraphrase is...

- your 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.

6 Steps to Effective Paraphrasing

1. Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning.

2. Set the original aside, and write your paraphrase on a note card.

3. Jot down a few words 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 your 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 your 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. Lester, James D. Writing Research Papers. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.

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 (Lester 46-47).

An acceptable summary:

Students should take just a few notes in direct quotation from sources to help minimize the amount of quoted material in a research paper (Lester 46-47).

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.

After reviewing this handout, try an exercise on paraphrasing at
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/research/r_paraphrEX1.html.