

Writing Module: Paraphrasing

In this module...

- Debunk common paraphrasing myths
- Learn 5 key paraphrasing strategies
- Test paraphrases for plagiarism

Myth #1

Paraphrasing means changing a few words here and there so that my version isn't identical to the original

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- Paraphrasing means putting ideas and information in your own words, using as few words as possible from the original.

Myth #2

Paraphrasing doesn't mean I have to change the structure or order of the sentences and words

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- The author “owns” both the words and the structure of the idea. To fully paraphrase, you must use your own words *and* structure.

Myth #3

I can use the author's idea any way I want in order to prove *my* point.

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- Never take an author's idea out of context—make sure your paraphrase preserves the meaning of the original.

Good paraphrases...

1) use synonyms/different forms of words

“Optimizing peak bone mass during the early years is thought to be a key factor in preventing osteoporosis later in life.”



One important way to prevent osteoporosis is to build bone mass while you are young (1).

Good paraphrases...

2) change the order and structure of sentences

“However, as the consequences of osteoporosis are not immediately evident, many young adults do not perceive themselves as being at risk; as a result, many young adults will therefore not practice preventative lifestyle habits such as participating in weight-bearing physical activity or consuming adequate amounts of calcium and vitamin D.”



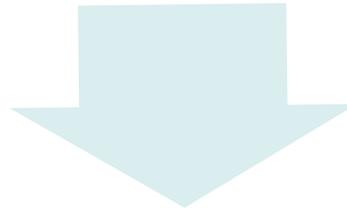
Few young adults exercise and take vitamins to prevent osteoporosis, because the effects of the disease are not visible until later in life and they are not aware of that they may be at risk (1).

Good paraphrases...

3) change the perspective or voice

We found that environmentally friendly products are being purchased more often by consumers.

Written from the
perspective of the
researchers



Researchers have shown that consumers are increasingly opting to buy products that are environmentally-friendly.

Written from your
perspective as a reader

Good paraphrases...

4) preserve the author's meaning or intent

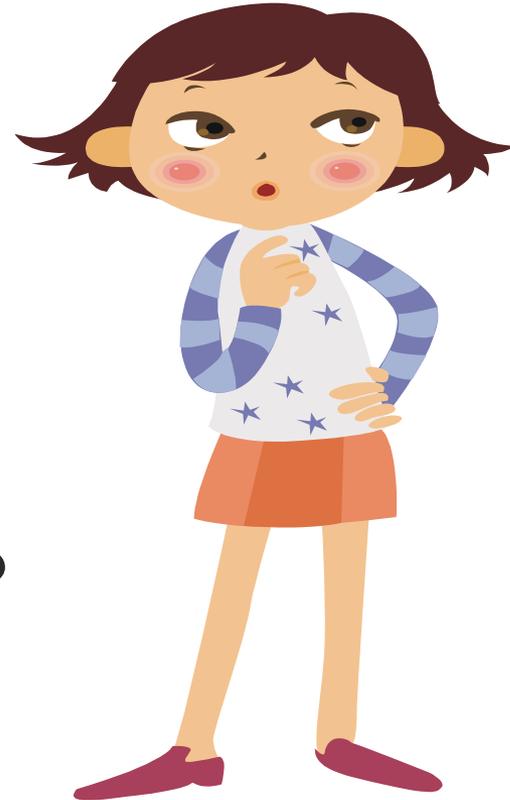
- Check and compare
 - Did you get the ideas right?
 - Underline any words echoed directly from the source

5) cite the source accurately

- Put the citation immediately where the paraphrase occurs
e.g. Researchers discovered the jiggawatt in 1975 (Smith, 2010).

Paraphrase or Plagiarism?

- Maria has written a paraphrase and wants to know if it's a paraphrase or plagiarism...can you tell the difference?



Step 1: Read the original

A variety of evidence points to the existence of dark matter in the universe. As it is not directly observable with conventional astronomical techniques, we must rely on computer modules to guide our understanding.

From: Lanzel, P.A. and Barnes, E.I. (2009). Global behavior of radial orbit instability. *Journal of Undergraduate Research in Physics* (Aug.): 1-13.
Excerpt is from p.1.

Step 2: Compare the original to Maria's paraphrase

What to watch for:

- copy no more than **3 WORDS IN A ROW?**
- use **SYNONYMS?**
- change the **ORDER** of the ideas?
- include a **REFERENCE** to the original work?

Step 2: Compare the original to Maria's paraphrase

Original:

A variety of evidence points to the existence of dark matter in the universe. As it is not directly observable with conventional astronomical techniques, we must rely on computer modules to guide our understanding.

From: Lanzel, P.A. and Barnes, E.I. (2009). Global behavior of radial orbit instability. *Journal of Undergraduate Research in Physics* (Aug.): 1-13. Excerpt is from p.1.

Maria's paraphrase:

There is a variety of evidence that shows dark matter exists in the universe. It is not directly observable with conventional astronomical techniques, so we must use computer models to guide our understanding.



Step 2: Compare the original to a paraphrase

Does the paraphrase copy more than 3 words in a row?

YES

•Does the paraphrase use SYNONYMS?

SOME, BUT NOT ENOUGH

•Does the paraphrase change the ORDER of the ideas?

NO

•Does the paraphrase include a reference to the original author?

NO

Maria's paraphrase:

There is a variety of evidence that shows **dark matter** exists in the universe. It is not directly observable with conventional astronomical techniques, so we must use computer models to guide our understanding.

-Words in blue are the same as those in the original

-Words in green are technical terms that do not (and should not) be changed to synonyms





Looks like Maria
needs to revise
her paraphrase.



Paraphrase or Plagiarism?



- Alex has written a paraphrase and wants to know if it's a paraphrase or plagiarism...what do you think?

Compare the original to Alex's paraphrase

Original:

A variety of evidence points to the existence of dark matter in the universe. As it is not directly observable with conventional astronomical techniques, we must rely on computer modules to guide our understanding.

From: Lanzel, P.A. and Barnes, E.I. (2009). Global behavior of radial orbit instability. *Journal of Undergraduate Research in Physics* (Aug.): 1-13.
Excerpt is from p.1.

Alex's paraphrase:

Research about the universe suggests that dark matter exists. However, scientists must use computer models to learn about it because dark matter can't be studied directly (Lanzel and Barnes, 2009).



Compare the original to Alex's paraphrase

Does the paraphrase copy more than 3 words in a row?

✓NO

•Does the paraphrase use SYNONYMS?

✓YES

•Does the paraphrase change the ORDER of the ideas?

✓YES

•Does the paraphrase include a reference to the original author?

✓YES

Alex's paraphrase:

Research about the universe suggests that dark matter exists. However, scientists must use computer models to learn about it because dark matter can't be studied directly (Lanzel and Barnes, 2009).

-Words in blue are the same as those in the original

-Words in green are technical terms that do not (and should not) be changed to synonyms





Alex's paraphrase
passes the test!



Final Tips

- Try reading the source and then putting it aside to draft your paraphrase
- Imagine you're explaining it to a friend
- Use a thesaurus with caution. Don't use a word unless you understand its meaning
- Keep technical terms
- Don't forget to cite!