  
 INFORMATION LITERACY PROGRAM  
 of Robert W. Sterling Sr. Memorial Library

**PARAPHRASING**-Write It in Your Own Words

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Paraphrasing is referencing someone else’s material. Anytime you are taking information from a source that is not your own**, you need to have a citation and bibliography entry.**

**Definition:** Rewriting ideas from a source in different words without changing its original meaning. It is your own rendition of essential information and ideas expressed by someone else, presented in a new form.

Finding new words for ideas that are already well expressed can be hard, but changing words should not be your chief aim anyway. Focus, rather, on filtering the ideas throughyour own understanding. The following steps will make the job of paraphrasing a lot easier:

1. Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning.
2. When you are at the note-taking stage, and you come across a passage that may be useful

for your essay, do not copy the passage verbatim unless you think you will want to quoteit.

If you think you will want to paraphrase the passage, make a note only of the author’s basic

point (or points). You don’t even need to use full sentences.

1. In your note, you should already be translating the language of the original into your own words. What matters is that you capture the original idea.
2. Make sure to jot down the source as well as the page number so that you can make a proper reference later on.

When it comes time to write the paper, rely on your notes rather than on the author’s work. You will find it much easier to avoid borrowing from the original passage because you will not have seen it recently. Follow this simple sequence:

1. Convert the ideas from your notes into full sentences.
2. Provide a reference.
3. Go back to the original to ensure that (a) your paraphrase is accurate and (b) you have truly

said things in your own words.

**\*Refer to examples on the back side**

**Examples to compare**

Note that the examples in this section use MLA style for in-text citation.

**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, pp. 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).

**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 note about plagiarism:** This example has been classed as plagiarism, in part, because of its failure to deploy any citation. Plagiarism is a serious offense in the academic world. However, we acknowledge that plagiarism is a difficult term to define; that its definition may be contextually sensitive; and that not all instances of plagiarism are created equal—that is, there are varying “degrees of egregiousness” for different cases of plagiarism.