

PARAPHRASING

What is paraphrasing?

A paraphrase restates a passage's ideas in your own words. The author's meaning is retained, but your own wording, instead of the author's, is used. In paraphrasing, you must pay careful attention to the meaning of the original passage, yet express the same idea in a different way. Paraphrasing makes you pay close attention to the author's ideas, and therefore improves your level of understanding. None of the original meaning is left out, and nothing is added. Always, one of the best ways to make sure that you understand some idea is to see if you can state it in your own words.

When to paraphrase:

- Paraphrasing can serve as a form of note-taking, allowing you to retain the writer's exact meaning in the terms that you can remember best.
- When reading reference sources for information for a research paper, paraphrasing is a means of recording information from each source in note form for later use in writing your paper.
- Paraphrasing is also useful when dealing with material for which exact, detailed comprehension is required.
- Paraphrasing is helpful for understanding extremely difficult or complicated passages that must be worked out word by word.

An example of a paraphrase:

Read the first four lines of a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay and think about how you would restate what they say:

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;

A paraphrase to these lines might be: Love cannot take care of all our needs. It cannot provide food or shelter or help us sleep or keep us from drowning.

How to paraphrase:

1. Read the passage through carefully before starting to paraphrase. (Often one sentence that is not clear by itself becomes clear as you read on.)
2. Check a dictionary for meanings of unfamiliar words. The dictionary may give you simpler language for the idea.
3. Paraphrase by idea, whether the idea is stated in a phrase or in several sentences; do not try to paraphrase word by word. Try to follow the development of ideas in the passage.
4. As you write each sentence of your paraphrase, do not look at the original passage. You want to show that you understand the ideas, not that you can just change a word around here or there. Good advice for honest paraphrasing: Do not use more than **three** words in a row from the original.
5. You may find that changing the order of ideas will help you use your own wording.
6. After you have finished your paraphrase, compare it to the original to see if you are satisfied with the accuracy and completeness of your notes.