Paraphrasing

What is a paraphrase?
Paraphrasing is the rewording of a passage into one’s own words. In most cases, a paraphrase is the same as a summary, but generally deals with smaller sections of text, such as one paragraph, rather than an entire story or essay.

When do you use it?
• To restate a piece of information for use as a secondary source in an essay.
• To summarizing information in non-fiction documents. Fiction, however, is more focused on descriptive language and can't be captured effectively by paraphrasing.

Paraphrase vs. summary
Paraphrase
• restates the original in different words
• useful for indirectly quoting small passages from a source

Summary
• condenses and highlights only the key points in a passage
• useful for dealing with an essay or story

Rules for paraphrasing
There are six rules to follow when paraphrasing, which are listed below. We will list each rule and give examples.

1. Only use a limited number of words from the original, or else it will be necessary to use quotation marks.
   • Original: Of the more than 1000 bicycling deaths each year, three-fourths are caused by head injuries. Half of those killed are school-age children. One study concluded that wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent. In an accident, a bike helmet absorbs the shock and cushions the head. Source: "Bike Helmets: Unused Lifesavers." Consumer Reports May 1990: 348.
   • Paraphrased: The use of a helmet is the key to reducing bicycling fatalities, which are due to head injuries 75% of the time.

2. Keep the paraphrase approximately the same length as the original.
   • Original: Of the more than 1000 bicycling deaths each year, three-fourths are caused by head injuries. Half of those killed are school-age children. One study concluded that wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent. In an accident, a bike helmet
absorbs the shock and cushions the head. (Word count 53)

- **Paraphrased:** The use of a helmet is the key to reducing fatalities, which are due to head injuries 75% of the time. By cushioning the head upon impact, a helmet can reduce accidental injury by as much as 85%, saving the lives of hundreds of victims annually, half of whom are school children. (Word count 53)(Bike Helmets 348)

3. Cite paraphrased passages directly after the paraphrase, not only in the Works Cited list.

- **Original:** Of the more than 1000 bicycling deaths each year, three-fourths are caused by head injuries. Half of those killed are school-age children. One study concluded that wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent. In an accident, a bike helmet absorbs the shock and cushions the head.

- **Paraphrased:** ... reduce accidental injury by as much as 85%, saving the lives of hundreds of victims annually, half of whom are school children. (Bike Helmets 348)

  **Note:** Please refer to your citation guide for the correct citation formatting (e.g. MLA, APA, etc.)

4. Try to use paraphrasing as an alternative to using direct quotes, which should be reserved for remarkable words/phrases that can’t be expressed in any other words.

- **Original:** Of the more than 1000 bicycling deaths each year, three-fourths are caused by head injuries. Half of those killed are school-age children. One study concluded that wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent. In an accident, a bike helmet absorbs the shock and cushions the head.

- **Paraphrased:** The use of a helmet is the key to reducing fatalities, which are due to head injuries 75% of the time. (Bike Helmets 348)

  **Instead of a quotation, such as:** “three-fourths are caused by head injuries.” (Bike Helmets 348)

5. Understand the article as a whole before you paraphrase. It is important to understand what the article is about and what the author’s stance on the topic is before you try to explain what he or she is saying.

- **Original:** Of the more than 1000 bicycling deaths each year, three-fourths are caused by head injuries. Half of those killed are school-age children. One study concluded that wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent. In an accident, a bike helmet absorbs the shock and cushions the head.

- **Author’s stance on the topic:** Bike helmets are a vital safety precaution that could save lives if more people wore them.

6. Do not merely replace words with synonyms. It is necessary to restate the whole meaning in a completely different way. Synonym – a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another in the same language.

- **Original:** Of the more than 1000 bicycling deaths each year, three-fourths are caused by
head injuries. Half of those killed are school-age children. One study concluded that wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent. In an accident, a bike helmet absorbs the shock and cushions the head.

- **Paraphrased:** Of the more than a thousand bicycling fatalities each year, three-fourths are caused by skull damage. (Bike Helmets 348) The example breaks rule #6 because it is basically a copy of the original.

**Shared language**

Shared language is the language shared among a group of people in a certain discipline or genre, and it does not need to be cited.

The following categories are types of shared language:

- **Conventional designations**, e.g. physician’s assistant; chronic back pain
- **Preferred bias-free language**, e.g. persons with disabilities
- **Technical terms and phrases of a discipline or genre**, e.g. reduplication, cognitive domain, material culture, sexual harassment.

It is better to use shared language than to attempt to express simple concepts in your own words.

**How do you Paraphrase?**

- Look away from the original, then write.
- Take notes, then go back a few days later and try to paraphrase again. It is sometimes good to have some distance from the passage so you can put it in context and retain the main ideas.
- Change the structure. Start at a different point in the paragraph or passage. This will force you to construct your sentences differently, and to use different words.
- Combine multiple short sentences and try to edit and shorten lengthy sentences.
- Change words and phrases from the original and avoid repetition.

**Quiz**

Now that you’ve learned about paraphrasing, it’s time to test your knowledge!

1. Is this a summary or a paraphrase?
   - b. Restating a paragraph from an article.
   
   Correct response: ‘a’ is a summary and ‘b’ is a paraphrase. Summaries highlight key points, paraphrases restate sections.

2. A paraphrase should be:
a. A maximum of one line long.

b. Approximately the same length as the original.

c. Shorter than the original.

d. Longer than the original.

The correct response is b: Paraphrases should be about the same length as the original passage.

3. True or false: You do not have to cite your sources when you paraphrase.

a. True

b. False

The correct response is b—false: You always have to cite your sources, even when you paraphrase.

4. Which option represents a correct paraphrase?

a. Original: “The results indicate a positive association between ever driving with pets... and MVC involvement...” Paraphrase: The study showed that driving with pets slightly increases the likelihood of being in a motor vehicle crash. (Huisingh, et al. 169)

b. Original: “The results indicate a positive association between ever driving with pets... and MVC involvement...” Paraphrase: The results show an affirmative association between driving with animal companions and automobile crash involvement.

The correct response is ‘a’. Your paraphrase still need a citation, and should change more than a few words.


5. Which option represents a correct paraphrase?

a. Original: The population pyramid shows that female and young age classes were more represented. Paraphrase: The study indicated that the population of cats skewed young and female. (Carvelli, et al. 1)

b. Original: The population pyramid shows that female and young age classes were more represented. Paraphrase: The population chart shows that female and younger cats were more represented. (Carvelli, et al. 1)

The correct response is ‘a’. Your paraphrase should use your own words, rather than changing out a few words from the original.