



Academic Writing Guide: Paraphrasing

Definition: A paraphrase is a restatement of another author's ideas in your own way, without changing the meaning or removing any information from the original text.

It is important to note that a paraphrase is not a direct quote and is more complex than using a few synonyms or rearranging the original passage. Writing a paraphrase is a skill that combines a few techniques, and it takes time and practice to master.

By following the 5 steps to paraphrasing outlined below, as well as some of the paraphrasing tips while you practice, you'll be well on your way to being a master paraphraser!

5 steps to paraphrasing

1. Read the passage several times to ensure you understand it completely. Look up the definition of any words you don't know.
2. Take note of key concepts in the text.
3. Without looking at the original, write your own version of the text.
4. Compare your paraphrase with the original text and if there are any phrases that are too similar, make changes.
5. Cite the source.

4 paraphrasing tips

1. Start your sentence from a different point than the original text.
2. Use synonyms.
3. Change the sentence structure (passive vs active voice.)
4. Break up long sentences into shorter ones or combine shorter sentences into longer ones.

A few things to keep in mind:

- A paraphrase is not a direct quote and therefore does not require quotation marks.
- A good paraphrase always uses a combination of a few different techniques.
- It's important to be accurate, keep the original meaning of the text and do not remove any information.

Example 1

Quoted text: "We are repelled by the prospect of cloning human beings not because of the strangeness or novelty of the undertaking, but because we intuit and feel, immediately and without argument, the violation of things that we rightfully hold dear" (Kass 3).

Good paraphrase: While making a clone of a human would be no small task, the thought is also an uncomfortable one. Humans are almost instinctively repulsed by the idea of copying, and potentially mutating, something that is so sacred (Kass 3).

Bad paraphrase: We are disgusted at the idea of cloning humans not because the undertaking is strange or novel, but because we feel intuitively and instantly, without disagreement, the disruption of what we justly treasure (Kass 3).

By only using few synonyms this 'paraphrase' is considered **plagiarism!**

Example 2

Quoted text: "We are living in a technical age. Many are convinced that science and technology hold the answers to all our problems. We should just let the scientists and technicians go on with their work, and they will create heaven here on earth" (Harari 302).

Good paraphrase: As we live in an era of technological advancements, the idea that our problems could be solved by science and technology is a convincing argument for many. A utopia could be within our reach if scientists and technicians were allowed to work freely on their craft (Harari 302).

Bad paraphrase: Technology is constantly solving our problems. By doing their regular work, scientists and technicians should be able to discover how to create heaven on earth (Harari 302).

This 'paraphrase' is too short, has omitted information, and uses many of the same terms. It is considered **plagiarism**.

Let's break it down; what tips were used to write the good paraphrase in Example 2?

Tip	Original	Paraphrase
Start your sentence from a different point	"We should just let the scientists and technicians go on with their work, and <u>they will create heaven here on earth.</u> "	<u>A utopia could be within our reach</u> if we would only allow scientists and technicians to work freely on their craft.
Use synonyms	"technical age" "Heaven on earth"	era of technological advancements a utopia
Change sentence structure	"many are convinced that" "We should just let the scientists and technicians"	is a convincing argument for many if scientists and technicians were allowed to
Combine shorter sentences into longer ones	"We are living in a technical age. Many are convinced that science and technology hold the answers to all our problems."	As we live in an era of technological advancements, the idea that our problems could be solved by science and technology is a convincing argument for many.

Remember:

6. A successful paraphrase is about sharing the author's ideas, not just using similar words
7. A paraphrase requires a citation! While it is written in your own words, it is not your own idea and the original author must be credited.

You may be wondering, if paraphrasing is so much work, why do we need to do it? A text that has been paraphrased correctly limits your usage of direct quotes, keeps your voice consistent throughout your paper, and shows the reader that you understand and can interpret your research.

For additional help, please make an appointment with a Writing & Learning Centre Humanities specialist at: <https://alexander.mywconline.com/>

Works Cited

Harari, Yuval Noah. *Sapiens*. Penguin Random House, 2014.

Kass, Leon. "Preventing a Brave New World." 2001.

<https://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil1100/Kass.pdf>. Accessed 8 Mar. 2021.