



## THE ART OF PARAPHRASING

Paraphrasing is the ability to make the same statement as another author, but by using your own words. Wait, why not just quote if you intend to say the same thing? Translating another author's work enables you to use and develop your own voice as a writer. Skillfully paraphrasing source material can improve the clarity and flow of your writing and may even more directly convey the original author's intended meaning. Also, consider the nature of your source and the audience of your work. Technical or research papers will often require interpretation to reach a greater range of readers.

The following techniques can help you master the art of paraphrasing.

- ◆ **Choose words deliberately.** Think about how the author uses language; is he or she effective in communicating with you as a reader? How can you restate key themes or ideas in a way that is effective for your audience by using different words?
- ◆ **Look up synonyms.** Synonyms are any set of words that have the same or very similar meanings. For example, "It is raining" could be paraphrased using words like storming, drizzling, pouring, precipitating, or sprinkling. Most word processors have a thesaurus function and [thesaurus.com](http://thesaurus.com) is a great online resource for finding synonyms.
- ◆ **Replace words with definitions.** "Terrigenous nutrient inputs may greatly increase the productivity of coastal marine systems." Defining 'terrigenous' results in "Land derived nutrient inputs..." This is particularly useful when translating jargon for a less specialized audience.



- ◆ **Use different word forms.** Sometimes, altering word choice can alter the meaning of a phrase beyond what you would like to convey. “Manuel happily accepted the dinner invitation” could be rewritten as “Being invited to dinner made Manuel happy”.
- ◆ **Play with numbers.** Is there a different way to express a time period or a number? “Throughout the past century” can become “Over the last 100 years”. “Beginning in 1990” could be “Over the past two decades”. Twenty-four becomes two dozen.
- ◆ **Vary sentence structure.** “Acting as a rogue state, North Korea persists in developing nuclear weapons capabilities” becomes: “North Korea continues to fall out of favor in the international community by pursuing nuclear weapons.” Note that word choice must be considered also, and changing the structure of a sentence may more easily allow use of a synonym, or a definition.
- ◆ **Integrate or separate sentences.** “Regular yoga sessions build muscle and improve range of motion. Yoga is also great for developing personal awareness.” These can be combined more directly into “Practicing yoga increases strength, flexibility, and mindfulness.”

*Paraphrased from Dennis Miller (2001).*

Finally, know when to use citations. Even if beautifully paraphrased, any information incorporated into your writing beyond what is considered common knowledge in your field should be credited to the original author. Commonly, credit is given using in text citations with an appended bibliography.

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### References:

Dennis Miller (2001). *Paraphrase Skill Builder*.

<http://itdc.lbcc.edu/oer/esl/esl33xal/presentations/paraphrasingtechtransition/paraphrasingtechtransition-notes.html>

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