



## TIPS ON PARAPHRASING

When I was younger my mother used to tell me: “The best way to learn a subject is to teach it to someone else.” She would then have me come home from school and give her a presentation about what I had learned in school that day. Although I used to groan about all of the extra work, years later I have come to realize how invaluable this lesson was.

When I first started writing research papers I wasn’t used to having to translate someone else’s ideas into my own words. I was used to creative writing where all of the language flowed naturally and authentically from my own imagination. Summarizing research was a new way to approach writing and I needed to quickly find a [tool](#) so that I wasn’t just pasting quote after quote of the original source.

Then I remembered my mother’s lesson. I began to quietly read the information over and over in my head until I felt like I had a good understanding. Then, without looking at the source again, I would try and write what I learned as though I was teaching it to someone else who had no knowledge of the subject. Not looking at the source directly forced me to pull from my own brain how to put language around the new material.

There was another added benefit to this method-if no words came to me, this was a sign that I didn’t have a full grasp of the concepts yet. I was then able to become curious about what I might need to better integrate the information. The teaching method not only clarified my own understanding of ideas, but it also helped me paraphrase using my own voice and avoid sticky pitfalls like plagiarism.

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