

## PARAPHRASING

**Paraphrasing** is one of the most common ways writers use sources to support the claims they make in their academic essay. Writers paraphrase by explaining another person's ideas clearly using one's own words. Paraphrasing demonstrates that the writer understands the sources they are using and how the sources provide support for their own claims.

### HOW TO PARAPHRASE

When you decide that you want to use ideas from a source in your writing, you should complete all of the following steps:

1. Read the source to make sure that it supports the claim you are making.
2. Re-read that section several times until you completely understand the main idea of the source material.
3. Once you understand the text, put it away and explain the information clearly in your own words.
4. Refer back to the original source to make sure that you are not using the exact structure or word choice of the source.
5. Cite your source!

### KEY ELEMENTS OF PARAPHRASING

Often, writers think just changing the important words from the original source is paraphrasing – **it is not!** There are five elements of the paraphrase that you must pay attention to:

- **Idea:** you should keep the original writer's ideas from the source in your paraphrase.
- **Word Choice:** pick words that are consistent with the rest of your writing.
  - Use words that actually sound like you and flow with the rest of the paper.
- **Sentence Structure:** change the order of the original sentence(s). Move the clauses around.
  - Make the sentence similar to the types of sentences you actually write.
    - **Organization:** if the paraphrase is more than one sentence, change the order of the sentences.
  - Decide which information is the most relevant to your claim and put it first.
    - **Attribution:** you must show the source that the paraphrase came from.
  - See the style guide you are working with to find out how to give attribution for paraphrases.

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## PROPER USE OF SOURCES

When you use a source, make sure to accurately present the author's and source material's intentions. To do so, you should properly integrate the information into your paper with direct quotes, paraphrases or summaries of sources. Be sure to attribute any source material using the correct citation information required by your chosen style guide. If you do not properly integrate your sources, you could run the risk of plagiarizing. When paraphrase is done incorrectly, it can lead to patchwriting and is a form of plagiarism.

**Patchwriting** is when a writer uses synonyms to make a paraphrase of a source look different even though the information and format remain the same. This is why you must follow the steps above to accurately paraphrase your source material.

### EXAMPLE

The following example is in MLA format. Remember to ask your professor and consult the proper style guide for your required format.

**Original Text:** For this reason, all astronomical refracting telescopes worthy of their salt use achromatic lenses, i.e., lenses comprised of several layers of glass having different densities and, therefore, different refractive indices.

**STOP! Plagiarism:** All refracting telescopes worthy of professional use have achromatic lenses, i.e., lenses that have many layers of glass which all have different densities and refractive indices.

- This is plagiarism because even though some words have been changed to make the text look different, many of the words are still exactly the same. The format is also the same as the original source, which we can tell because the words all come in the same order. The source was also not attributed to the original author.

**OK! Paraphrase:** Seargent claims that because achromatic lenses have many different layers of glass, they refract light in a more accurate way, making them better lenses for professional telescopes (15).

- This is a good example of paraphrasing because the author's idea has been rephrased in the writer's own words and is attributed to the original author.