



Paraphrasing and Summarizing

PARAPHRASE

Definition: A paraphrase precisely restates in your own words the written or spoken word of someone else.

Guidelines:

- Use your own words, phrasing, and sentence structure to restate the message. If some words have only awkward synonyms, quote the original but do so sparingly. You can use technical terms from the original.
- In your own words restate the source's order of ideas and emphases without adding additional detail.
- Read your sentences over to make sure they do not distort the source's meaning.
- Expect your material to be as long as, and possibly longer than, the original.
- Avoid plagiarism. Document carefully. You are required to give the source of any paraphrase, just as you do for quotations and summaries.
- Select for paraphrase only the passages that carry ideas you need to reproduce in detail. Because paraphrasing calls for a very close approximation of a source, avoid trying to paraphrase large chunks of text. Even one page is too much.

Source: Weiss, R. "Safety Gets Short Shrift on Long Night Shift." *Science News*, 21 May 1989, p. 37.

Original Material: *In a pilot study of 28 medical interns, Weiss found that during the past year more than one-quarter of them had fallen asleep while talking on the telephone. Thirty-four percent reported at least one actual or near-miss automobile accident during the year because of sleepiness – more than triple that percentage they reported in the year before their internship (37).*

Acceptable Paraphrase: *In a study by Weiss of 28 medical interns observed during late-night shifts over a one-year period, 25 percent admitted to falling asleep while talking on the phone, and 34 percent had at least one accident or near accident during that period (37).*

SUMMARIZE

Definition: A summary differs from a paraphrase in one important way: a paraphrase restates the original material completely, but a summary provides only the main point of the original source and is much shorter. Summarizing is the technique you will probably use most frequently, both for taking notes and for incorporating what you have learned from sources into your own writing. A summary is written in your own words. If you use a phrase verbatim from your source, you must put quotation marks around the phrase.

Guidelines:

- Identify the main points and condense them using your own words without losing the message.
- Keep your summary short.
- Avoid plagiarism. Document carefully. You are required to give the source of any summary, just as you do for quotations and paraphrases.
- Do not be tempted to interpret something the author says or to make a judgment about the values of the argument. Your own opinions do not belong in a summary.

Source: Thorne-Miller, Boyce, and John G. Catena. "The Living Ocean: Understanding and Protecting Marine Biodiversity." *Science*, 1991, pp. 3-4.

Original Material: As human beings have populated the lands of the earth, we have pushed out other forms of life. It seemed to some that our impact must stop at the ocean's edge, but that has not proved to be so. By overharvesting the living bounty of the sea and by flushing the wastes and by-products of our societies from the land into the ocean, we have managed to impoverish, if not destroy, living ecosystems there as well (Thorne-Miller 3-4).

Acceptable Summary: People have destroyed numerous forms of life on land and are now doing the same with the oceans. Overfishing and dumping waste products into the waters have brought about the destruction of various forms of ocean life.