Guidelines for Paraphrasing Sources

Most students do not realize that paraphrases require citations similar to those used for quotations. Learning how to paraphrase your sources properly will help you avoid "accidental" plagiarism.

**What is a paraphrase?**

Paraphrasing is following the author's original presentation of ideas, but restating those ideas in your own words.

**When is a paraphrase useful?**

You should paraphrase when...

- you want to express the author's idea but not necessarily the author's language;
- you want to clarify an author's ideas for the reader and/or for yourself;
- you want an alternative to quoting;
- you want to integrate information from charts, graphs, tables, lectures, etc;
- you need an authority on the topic or to support your ideas.

**How is a paraphrase written?**

Before you write the paraphrase...

1. Read the text once in its entirety, without taking notes or worrying about what you do not understand. Set the text aside and write down what you remember.
2. Read the text a second time, circling words/phrases you do not know, taking notes in the margins, and underlining phrases/sentences you like or have questions about. Set the text aside and revise what you wrote after the first reading.
3. Read the text thoroughly a third time. Look up the words/phrases that you do not understand and compare meanings to their usage in the text.
4. Read through your notes and rewrite them as if you were explaining the text to someone else. Change the sentence patterns from the original text, change the words, and use quotations marks around key words and phrases you want to preserve and use.
5. Repeat steps 1–4 until you are comfortable to write a draft of your paraphrase and move on to the guidelines below.

When you write the paraphrase...
1. Introduce the source in a signal phrase. Here is a common formula you can use: In "[name of article]," [author] writes... [State the main point of the text first.]
2. It should be about the same length as the original source.
3. Compare your version to the original. Make sure that you used your own words and sentence structure.
4. Remember that if you used any key words or phrases, enclose them in quotation marks.
5. Include a parenthetical citation.

PARAPHRASE SAMPLE

Original Source


The feminization of clerical work and teaching by the turn of the century reflected the growth of business and public education. It also reflected limited opportunities elsewhere. Throughout the nineteenth century, stereotyping of work by sex had restricted women’s employment. Job options were limited; any field that admitted women attracted a surplus of applicants willing to work for less pay than men would have received. The entry of women into such fields—whether grammar school teaching or office work—drove down wages.

Student Version

According to Nancy Woloch (2002) in *Women and the American Experience: A Concise History*, the "feminization" of jobs in the nineteenth century had two major effects: a lack of employment opportunities for women and inadequate compensation for positions that were available. Thus, while clerical and teaching jobs indicated a boom in these sectors, women were forced to apply for jobs that would pay them less than male workers were paid (p. 170). The student version is *properly paraphrased* because...

- It introduces the source in a proper signal phrase;
- It is about the same length as the original passage;
- It uses the student's own words and sentence structure;
- It encloses a key word from the original source with quotation marks;
- It includes a parenthetical citation in correct APA format.