

## Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing means using your own words to describe somebody else's argument.

There may be several reasons for wanting to paraphrase :

1. The passage is too long to use as a quotation and you don't want to be accused of plagiarizing.
2. The register of the writing is not suitable (for example informal rather than formal).
3. The language is not suitable for your target audience (difficult to understand).

*A paraphrase is a restatement, in your own words, of a passage of text. Its structure reflects the structure of the source passage. Paraphrases are sometimes the same length as the source passage, sometimes shorter. In certain cases—particularly if the source passage is written in densely constructed or jargon-laden prose—the paraphrase may be even longer than the original. . . . Keep in mind that only an occasional word (but not whole phrases) from the original source appears in the paraphrase, and that a paraphrase's sentence structure does not reflect that of the source.* ( p. 580, Rosen and Behrens)

## How to Paraphrase

1. Exclude unnecessary information and include only what is important to your topic. Keep the essential meaning of the original.
2. Use your own words and don't merely substitute synonyms for words.
3. Look up any technical words that you don't know. Understand all specialized vocabulary. Don't include your own comments.

Introduce your paraphrase with a signal phrase. If you don't use a signal phrase, cite your source afterwards

## Using Signal Words

Alert your readers that the upcoming text contains information from an outside source. You can introduce a paraphrase with the source's name:

*According to the policy book at Colorado State University, minors who are caught drinking will be fined (4).*

Remember that there are a number a phrases like this that you can use for variety. Action verbs are particularly useful as signal words:

- |               |            |            |
|---------------|------------|------------|
| - argues      | - observes | - claims   |
| - suggests    | - notes    | - rejects  |
| - illustrates | - proves   | - believes |

## PRACTICE

Read each of the following passages and paraphrase it by putting it into your own words.

1. By mid-December, 1914, British troops had been fighting on the Continent for over five months. Casualties had been shocking, positions had settled into self-destructive stalemate, and sensitive people now perceived that the war, far from promising to be "over by Christmas," was going to extend itself to hitherto unimagined reaches of suffering and irony. From Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*. London: Oxford University Press, 1977.

### **Possible Paraphrase**

There is not a single correct answer, but you could paraphrase the above passage by writing something like this:

After more than five months of fighting, the British had lost so many men and they were unable to make progress. People began to realize that the war would not end before Christmas. Instead, it would continue for longer and be more ironic than they had ever imagined.

2. In 1610, Galileo Galilei published a small book describing astronomical observations that he had made of the skies above Padua. His homemade telescopes had less magnifying and resolving power than most beginners' telescopes sold today, yet with them he made astonishing discoveries: that the moon has mountains and other topographical features; that Jupiter is orbited by satellites, which he called planets; and that the Milky Way is made up of individual stars. From David Owen, "The Dark Side: Making War on Light Pollution," *The New Yorker* (20 August 2007): 28.

### **Possible Paraphrase**

Galileo was able to make some amazing discoveries with his telescope. He made discoveries about the moon, about Jupiter, and about the Milky Way. He was able to do this with a telescope that was less powerful than even today's most basic telescopes.

3. A key factor in explaining the sad state of American education can be found in overbureaucratization, which is seen in the compulsion to consolidate our public schools into massive factories and to increase to mammoth size our universities even in underpopulated states. The problem with bureaucracies is that they have to work hard and long to keep from substituting self-serving survival and growth for their original primary objective. Few succeed. Bureaucracies have no soul, no memory, and no conscience. If there is a single stumbling block on the road to the future, it is the bureaucracy as we know it.

Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture*, Anchor Publishing, 1977, p. 219

### **Possible Paraphrase**

In his book, *Beyond Culture*, Edward T. Hall discusses the problems posed by the increasing bureaucratization of American educational institutions. Hall maintains that overbureaucratization is one of the key factors governing the state of education in America today. He points to the tendency of bureaucracies to promote their own growth and survival first and foremost, and observes that few overcome that tendency. He believes that this is responsible for the fact that many public schools bear a closer resemblance to factories than to educational institutions. In Hall's words, "Bureaucracies have no soul, no memory, and no conscience."

## Paraphrasing Practice

**Paraphrase the following passages, using the citation information provided.**

1. "The Antarctic is the vast source of cold on our planet, just as the sun is the source of our heat, and it exerts tremendous control on our climate," [Jacques] Cousteau told the camera. "The cold ocean water around Antarctica flows north to mix with warmer water from the tropics, and its upwellings help to cool both the surface water and our atmosphere. Yet the fragility of this regulating system is now threatened by human activity." From "Captain Cousteau," Audubon (May 1990):17.
2. The twenties were the years when drinking was against the law, and the law was a bad joke because everyone knew of a local bar where liquor could be had. They were the years when organized crime ruled the cities, and the police seemed powerless to do anything against it. Classical music was forgotten while jazz spread throughout the land, and men like Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie became the heroes of the young. The flapper was born in the twenties, and with her bobbed hair and short skirts, she symbolized, perhaps more than anyone or anything else, America's break with the past. From Kathleen Yancey, English 102 Supplemental Guide (1989): 25.
3. Of the more than 1000 bicycling deaths each year, three-fourths are caused by head injuries. Half of those killed are school-age children. One study concluded that wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent. In an accident, a bike helmet absorbs the shock and cushions the head. From "Bike Helmets: Unused Lifesavers," Consumer Reports (May 1990): 348.
4. Matisse is the best painter ever at putting the viewer at the scene. He's the most realistic of all modern artists, if you admit the feel of the breeze as necessary to a landscape and the smell of oranges as essential to a still life. "The Casbah Gate" depicts the well-known gateway Dab el Aassa, which pierces the southern wall of the city near the sultan's palace. With scrubby coats of ivory, aqua, blue, and rose delicately fenced by the liveliest gray outline in art history, Matisse gets the essence of a Tangier afternoon, including the subtle presence of the bowaab, the sentry who sits and surveys those who pass through the gate. From Peter Plagens, "Bright Lights." Newsweek (26 March 1990): 50.
5. While the Sears Tower is arguably the greatest achievement in skyscraper engineering so far, it's unlikely that architects and engineers have abandoned the quest for the world's tallest building. The question is: Just how high can a building go? Structural engineer William LeMessurier has designed a skyscraper nearly one-half mile high, twice as tall as the Sears Tower. And architect Robert Sobel claims that existing technology could produce a 500-story building. From Ron Bachman, "Reaching for the Sky." Dial (May 1990): 15.

6. "At some point in the assimilation to the new way, the immigrant child realizes that his or her parents are no longer sources of real knowledge about the new society. Their information and their way of life are no longer the way to success, and as soon as the child understands this, his or her attitude towards the parents changes. Though some people consider such changes to be a betrayal, they are an inevitable part of assimilation." (Adam Khutorsky, "Immigrants Adapting")

7. "The undermining of self, of a woman's sense of her right to occupy space and walk freely in the world, is deeply relevant to education. The capacity to think independently, to take intellectual risks, to assert ourselves mentally, is inseparable from our physical way of being in the world, our feelings of personal integrity. If it is dangerous for me to walk home late from the library, *because I am a woman and can be raped*, how self-possessed, how exuberant can I feel as I sit working in the library? How much of my working energy is drained by the subliminal knowledge that, as a woman, I test my physical right to exist each time I go out alone?" (Adrienne Rich, "Taking Women Students Seriously")

8. "Email's intoxicating qualities are now well known: It's convenient, efficient, simple, and informal, a way to stay connected to more people, a democratizing force in the workplace and less intrusive than the telephone. But as email proliferates, its more pernicious effects are increasingly evident. Much as it facilitates the conduct of business, email is threatening to overrun people's lives." (Tony Schwartz, "Going Postal")

Source : [http://www.middlesexcc.edu/faculty/Robert\\_Roth/ParaphraseEx.htm](http://www.middlesexcc.edu/faculty/Robert_Roth/ParaphraseEx.htm)