

Paraphrasing Practice

Why is paraphrasing such a valuable skill?

When you paraphrase an idea from a source, you need to make sure you fully understand the point the author is trying to convey—an activity that requires close reading and critical thinking skills.

Paraphrasing also shows your reader that you have spent a good amount of time thinking about your sources and how they are integral to your own writing.

5 Steps to Effective Paraphrasing

1. Read the original passage several times until you feel you fully understand it.
2. Imagine how you would explain this passage verbally to someone who had not read it.
3. Put the passage aside and write/type it in your own words.
4. Check your version with original. Make sure that the structure of your version and that of the original are different. Make sure that you have not used any of the distinct wording from the original. If you have, and cannot think of how else to phrase these words, place quotation marks around them.
5. Once you feel you have a strong paraphrase—one that is worded and structured differently from the original— place a properly formatted parenthetical citation after it.

Paraphrasing Examples

MLA

Original text:

- “*Romeo and Juliet* is not only the tale of two young, doomed lovers; it is the story of how youth can be destroyed when the banality of adulthood is imminent” (Smith 76).

Incorrect Paraphrase

- *Romeo and Juliet* is not only a story of a young pair of tragic lovers; it is a tale of the destruction of youth in the face of the monotony of adulthood (Smith 76).
- *Although the writer has properly cited the idea, this is an incorrect paraphrase because he/she has not changed the structure of the author’s original sentence, instead simply substituting synonyms for various words.*

Correct Paraphrase

- It is the uninspired lifestyle of being an adult, and the destruction of one’s childhood innocence that results from its onset, that truly characterizes *Romeo and Juliet*, not simply the story of tragic unrequited love (Smith 76).
- *The writer has used his/her own wording and has restructured the order of ideas within the sentence.*

APA

Original text

- “Students need to be more cognizant of the fact that universities are looking for both high grades and extracurricular activities when accepting new students” (Jones, 2005, p. 255).

Incorrect Paraphrase

- Young people must recognize that colleges are seeking good grades and outside activities when admitting students (Jones, 2005).
 - *The writer has not properly cited the idea because the page number was left out. He/she also has not changed the structure of the author’s original sentence, instead simply substituting synonyms for various words.*

Correct Paraphrases

- When considering the admission process at a college, academic achievement and participation in school and community activities are both equally important for students. (Jones, 2005, p. 255).
 - *The writer has provided a correct citation, used his/her own wording, and has restructured the order of ideas within the sentence.*

Chicago Style

Original text:

- “*Romeo and Juliet* is not only the tale of two young, doomed lovers; it is the story of how youth can be destroyed when the banality of adulthood is imminent” (see note 2).

Incorrect Paraphrase

- *Romeo and Juliet* is not only a story of a young pair of tragic lovers; it is a tale of the destruction of youth in the face of the monotony of adulthood.¹
 - *The writer has not properly cited the idea because the page number was left out of the footnote below. He/she also has not changed the structure of the author’s original sentence, instead simply substituting synonyms for various words.*

Correct Paraphrase

- It is the uninspired lifestyle of being an adult, and the destruction of one’s childhood innocence that results from its onset, that truly characterizes *Romeo and Juliet*, not simply the story of tragic unrequited love).²
 - *The writer has properly cited the paraphrase (page number included in the footnote), used his/her own wording, and has restructured the order of ideas within the sentence.*

Permission is granted to duplicate and distribute this handout, providing that the following information remain intact:

This page is located at: www.strose.edu/writingcenter

The College of Saint Rose, 2007, 2011 Designed by Jaclyn Amoroso

1. John Smith, *Innocence in Shakespeare’s Tragedies* (London: Bard Press, 1999).

2. John Smith, *Innocence in Shakespeare’s Tragedies* (London: Bard Press, 1999), 76.