Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a useful way to integrate sources into your essay. This tip sheet will answer the following questions about paraphrasing:

- What is a paraphrase?
- When do you paraphrase?
- What is the difference between a paraphrase and a summary?
- How do you paraphrase?

What is a paraphrase?
A paraphrase is the rewording of a passage into one’s own words. In most cases, a paraphrase is the same as a summary, but generally deals with smaller sections of text, such as one paragraph, rather than an entire story or essay.

When do you paraphrase?
Paraphrasing is primarily about summarizing information in non-fiction documents.

It is usually used to restate a piece of information for use as a secondary source in an essay. Fiction, however, is more focused on descriptive language and can't be captured effectively by paraphrasing.

What is the difference between a paraphrase and a summary?
A summary condenses and highlights only the key points in a passage, whereas a paraphrase restates the original in different words. A summary is a more useful tool for dealing with an essay or story. It helps to highlight only the main points. A paraphrase is more useful for indirectly quoting small passages from a source, by telling exactly what it says, but saying it in your own words.

How do you paraphrase?

- Look away from the original, and then write.
- Take notes, then go back a few days later and try to paraphrase again. It is sometimes good to have some distance from the passage so you can put it in context and retain the main ideas.
- Change the structure. Start at a different point in the paragraph or passage. This will force alternate sentence construction and varied word choice.
- Combine multiple short sentences and try to edit and shorten lengthy sentences.
- Change words and phrases from the original and avoid repetition.
**Rules for paraphrasing**

1. Only use a limited number of words from the original, or else it will be necessary to use quotation marks.
2. Keep the paraphrase approximately the same length as the original.
3. It is necessary to cite paraphrased passages directly after the paraphrase, not only in the Works Cited list.
4. Try to use paraphrasing as an alternative to using direct quotes, which should be reserved for remarkable words/phrases that can’t be expressed in any other words.
5. Understand the article as a whole before you paraphrase. It is important to understand what the article is about and what the author’s stance on the topic is before you try to explain what he or she is saying.
6. Do not merely replace words with synonyms. It is necessary to restate the whole meaning in a completely different way. Synonym – a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another in the same language.

**Shared language**

Shared language is the language shared among a group of people in a certain discipline or genre.

The following categories are types of shared language:

- **Conventional designations**, e.g. physician’s assistant; chronic back pain
- **Preferred bias-free language**, e.g. persons with disabilities
- **Technical terms and phrases of a discipline or genre**, e.g. reduplication, cognitive domain, material culture, sexual harassment.

You do not need to cite shared language. It is more like terminology than a way of expressing something. It is better to use shared language than to attempt to express simple concepts in your own words.