

Summary and Paraphrasing

B.A.(Prog) II Sem

English-A

Paraphrasing involves taking a passage - either spoken or written - and rewording it. Writers often paraphrase sentences and paragraphs to deliver information in a more concise way, as you'll see in the examples below. When paraphrasing, it is important to keep the original meaning so that the facts remain intact. Basically, you are writing something in your own words that still expresses the original idea.

Paraphrasing is common when writing an essay or research paper. It allows you to explain important ideas in your own writing style and focus on the information that is most useful in making your point. Even when you put someone else's ideas into your own words, you must cite the source of your information. This gives credit to the original author for their ideas.

Paraphrasing is slightly different than summarizing. When you summarize a passage, you focus on restating only the main idea in your own words. Paraphrasing, on the other hand, aims to provide most of the information in a slightly condensed form. Summaries are much shorter than the original passage, while paraphrasing can be shorter, longer or the same length.

Paraphrasing Sentences

Sometimes you only need to paraphrase the information from one sentence. Here are some examples of paraphrasing individual sentences:

Original: Her life spanned years of incredible change for women as they gained more rights than ever before.

Paraphrase: She lived through the exciting era of women's liberation.

Original: Giraffes like Acacia leaves and hay, and they can consume 75 pounds of food a day.

Paraphrase: A giraffe can eat up to 75 pounds of Acacia leaves and hay daily.

Original: Any trip to Italy should include a visit to Tuscany to sample the region's exquisite wines.

Paraphrase: Be sure to make time for a Tuscan wine-tasting experience when visiting Italy.

Original: Symptoms of influenza include fever and nasal congestion.

Paraphrase: A stuffy nose and elevated temperature are signs you may have the flu.

Original: The price of a resort vacation typically includes meals, tips and equipment rentals, which makes your trip more cost-effective.

Paraphrase: All-inclusive resort vacations can make for an economical trip.

Original: He has tons of stuff to throw away.

Paraphrase: He needs to get rid of a lot of junk.

Paraphrasing Paragraphs

Paraphrasing a longer passage can take a little more effort, as you have to ensure it is different enough from the original to be classed as your own work.

Here is an example of paraphrasing a paragraph from "Family Values and Feudal Codes: The Social Politics of America's Twenty-First Century Gangster." *Journal of Popular Culture* 37.4 (2004) by Ingrid Field Walker, taken from Duke University Libraries.

Original passage:

In *The Sopranos*, the mob is besieged as much by inner infidelity as it is by the federal government. Early in the series, the greatest threat to Tony's Family is his own biological family. One of his closest associates turns witness for the FBI, his mother colludes with his uncle to contract a hit on Tony, and his kids click through Web sites that track the federal crackdown in Tony's gangland.

Paraphrased passage:

In the first season of *The Sopranos*, Tony Soprano's mobster activities are more threatened by members of his biological family than by agents of the federal government. This familial betrayal is multi-pronged. Tony's closest friend and associate is an FBI informant, his mother and uncle are conspiring to have him killed, and his children are surfing the Web for information about his activities.

The main point of this passage is that problems within the family are as bad as, if not worse than, problems caused by the federal government. Details about this betrayal include someone close turning informant, a hit being put out on Tony by family members, and Tony's kids tracking his activities. As you can see, the main idea and important details are included in the paraphrased version, though the wording is quite different.

Here is a summary of some of the main changes made during the paraphrasing process:

Early in the series = first season

Greatest threat = more threatened

One of his closest associates = closest friend and associate

His mother colludes with his uncle = his mother and uncle are conspiring

His kids click through Web sites = his children are surfing the Web

Avoid Plagiarism

There is a fine line between plagiarism and paraphrasing. If the wording, or even the sentence structure, of the paraphrased text is too close to the wording of the original content, it will look like you are trying to pass off someone else's words as your own. This is plagiarism, which is unethical and even illegal in some cases. The main ideas need to come through, but the wording has to be your own.

If you don't think you can paraphrase a sentence or passage and have the meaning come across as clearly, you can use the original author's exact words

if you put them in quotation marks. You will also need to identify the source of the material by giving the author's name. For example:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

In this example, Dr. King's exact words are quoted, and he is given credit for them in the sentence.

If you choose to paraphrase information and put it into your own words instead, you will still need to give credit to the original author for ideas that are unique and not common knowledge. For example:

According to New York Times columnist Paul Krugman, the economy is doing well based on GDP and falling unemployment.

In this case, the writer put Paul Krugman's ideas into their own words, but still gave credit for them by naming him as the source. This is required when the ideas aren't considered general knowledge available to all. Because Krugman is an expert in economics, these ideas are his and should be cited as such.

On the other hand, common facts like historical dates and basic information do not need to be cited. For example, you would not need to find an encyclopaedia article to back you up if you wrote that the Battle of Gettysburg ended on July 3, 1863, or that the earth revolves around the sun. These are well-known facts accepted by all and do not require sources.

Summary

A summary is shortened version of a larger reading. In your summary, you state the main idea in your own words, but specific examples and details are left out.

How to Summarize:

Start by reading the text and highlighting the main points as you read.

Reread the text and make notes of the main points, leaving out examples, evidence, etc.

Without the text, rewrite your notes in your own words. Restate the main idea at the beginning of your summary plus all major points. Include the conclusion or the final findings of the work.

QUALITIES OF A SUMMARY

A good summary should be comprehensive, concise, coherent, and independent. These qualities are explained below:

A summary must be comprehensive: You should isolate all the important points in the original passage and note them down in a list. Review all the ideas on your list, and include in your summary all the ones that are indispensable to the author's development of her/his thesis or main idea.

A summary must be concise: Eliminate repetitions in your list, even if the author restates the same points. Your summary should be considerably shorter than the source. You are hoping to create an overview; therefore, you need not include every repetition of a point or every supporting detail.

A summary must be coherent: It should make sense as a piece of writing in its own right; it should not merely be taken directly from your list of notes or sound like a disjointed collection of points.

A summary must be independent: You are not being asked to imitate the author of the text you are writing about. On the contrary, you are expected to maintain your own voice throughout the summary. Don't simply quote the author; instead use your own words to express your understanding of what you have read. After all, your summary is based on your interpretation of the

writer's points or ideas. However, you should be careful not to create any misrepresentation or distortion by introducing comments or criticisms of your own.

Example:

A Summary of Shakespeare's "Hamlet"

"One way of discovering the overall pattern of a piece of writing is to summarize it in your own words. The act of summarizing is much like stating the plot of a play. For instance, if you were asked to summarize the story of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet,' you might say:

It's the story of a young prince of Denmark who discovers that his uncle and his mother have killed his father, the former king. He plots to get revenge, but in his obsession with revenge he drives his sweetheart to madness and suicide, kills her innocent father, and in the final scene poisons and is poisoned by her brother in a duel, causes his mother's death, and kills the guilty king, his uncle.

This summary contains a number of dramatic elements: a cast of characters (the prince; his uncle, mother, and father; his sweetheart; her father, and so on), a scene (Elsinore Castle in Denmark), instruments (poisons, swords), and actions (discovery, dueling, killing)." -Richard E. Young, Alton L. Becker, and Kenneth L. Pike.