Paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting

Definitions

**Paraphrase:** A rewording or restatement, with the purpose of explaining or clarifying it. Usually one would paraphrase a phrase, a sentence, a few sentences, or a paragraph of an article (rarely more than a paragraph). A paraphrase should not include the wording of the original passage, nor should it follow the same sentence structure as the original passage.

**Summary:** A condensed, reworded summary of part of an article – restating a portion of a text in a shortened form. A summary should bring out the main ideas of the passage, but it does not need to follow the same order as the original text. A summary should be clear, concise, and accurate in representing the original text. In academic talks or writing, summaries are preferable over paraphrases.

**To quote** means to copy exactly a portion of a text, with the purpose of presenting the author's actual words.

Paraphrased, summarized, or quoted information must be accompanied by a citation, or in-text reference to the source from which you took the information, just as quoted material must be. Failure to provide citation will be interpreted by others as plagiarism, even if you list the source in your bibliography.

Paraphrases and summaries

- Quote material that supports the assertions you make in your paper.
- Quote authorities who disagree with a position you are advocating or who offer alternative explanations or contradictory data.
- Present and discuss the essential details of the passage
- Includes main idea / argument and supporting main ideas

Changes in sentence structure

- You need not follow the same order as the original text; things may be re-arranged, depending on your purposes
- Wording and non-essential wording should be changed or modified, except for key words, e.g., technical terms

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1 This handout is adapted from the following: http://www.bridgewater.edu/WritingCenter, http://www.coconino.edu/library/handouts, http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_quotprsum.html.

2 There may be somewhat of a gray area or overlap between ‘paraphrase’ and ‘summary’; generally, a paraphrase is shorter or somewhat shorter than the original text, while a paraphrase is much shorter.
• Phrases and sentences that are unique phrases coined by the author should be in quotes, or at least followed directly by an in-text citation, e.g., if the author uses unique phrases that are important to his/her ideas

• A paraphrase, summary, or quotation must be cited with an in-text citation

• Longer paraphrases / summaries can have a lead-in / transitional, e.g., “according to”, “research by (Smith, 1990) found that…”

• Use reporting verbs (X observed, noted, discussed, explained, claimed, reported...)

• Only summarize / paraphrase content that is essential – not the whole paper

• Summarize / rephrase in your own words

• Change function words; change content words that are non-essential, e.g., words other than those essential for describing the main idea

• Don’t copy and paste

• Avoid patchwriting – copying, pasting, and changing only a few words

• Clearly distinguish between content of original source, and your own comments (e.g., with a transitional word, e.g., ‘however / thus/ then, as a result…’). If you shift back to a summary of the original source, recite at least the author’s name

• The length of a paraphrase or summary should depend on how important the original content is to your paper.

• Only paraphrase / summarize material that you understand.

• Make sure you understand the meaning of the original passage. Note how the writer may be using words / phrases that are unfamiliar to you, technical phrases, or special terms.

• Find synonyms for content words (other than special terms that are essential or unique).

• Integrate the summary / paraphrase with the rest of your paper’s contents to make it coherent, with proper, sensible flow of ideas.

Transitions (connectives)

Try the following words to integrate summarized or cited material in a talk. For more, see www.tinyurl.com/kentlee7/writing.htm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition Type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>in contrast, on the contrary, on the other hand, still, however, yet, but, nevertheless, despite, even so, even though, whereas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>similarly, in the same way, as, just as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples, illustrations</td>
<td>for example, for instance, to illustrate, to show, in particular, specifically, that is, in addition, moreover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes or effects</td>
<td>as a result, accordingly, therefore, then, because, so thus, consequently, hence, since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions or summaries</td>
<td>in conclusion, finally, in summary, evidently, clearly, of course, to sum up, therefore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead-in</td>
<td>according to X, another study found, X reports/reported that, other studies have shown...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quotations

• Don’t overuse quotations
• Do not quote simply to fill up space
• Do not quote because you don’t understand the author’s ideas or wording enough to be able to paraphrase / summarize them
• Usually the ideas, not the wording, is important in our field, so paraphrases / summaries are most typical

Quotations are rarely used in science and related fields, but more often in humanities fields. Its use, especially in the social sciences, is limited to the following:

• When the author says something in a distinctive, unique, or memorable way
• The language of the passage is particularly elegant or powerful or memorable.
• You wish to confirm the credibility of your argument by enlisting the support of an authority on your topic.
• The passage is worthy of further analysis.
• You wish to argue with someone else’s position in considerable detail

Citations

Don’t cite common knowledge – items known to any intelligent educated audience, e.g., “Children learn language from parents” or “English is a lingua franca.” Don’t use common cliches, like how the world is becoming globalized, or how important English is today. Don’t cite items known to students and scholars in the field, e.g.,

• Language learning is subject to critical period effects (if talking to people who know linguistics or child psychology)
• Psychologists rejected behaviorism in the 1960’s and 70’s (if speaking to psychology majors).

Do cite:

• Statistical information from a particular study
• Items not commonly known to readers
• Findings and ideas from researchers – their published research findings, theories, and ideas, i.e., their intellectual property
• Specific, unique, or technical phrases borrowed from other papers
Example of paraphrasing

From a definition of color blindness:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original text</th>
<th>Paraphrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“...visual defect resulting in the inability to distinguish colors. About 8% of men and 0.5% of women experience some difficulty in color perception. Color blindness is usually an inherited sex-linked characteristic, transmitted through, but recessive in, females. Acquired color blindness results from certain degenerative diseases of the eyes. Most of those with defective color vision are only partially color-blind to red and green, i.e., they have a limited ability to distinguish reddish and greenish shades. Those who are completely color-blind to red and green see both colors as a shade of yellow. Completely color-blind individuals can recognize only black, white, and shades of gray. (Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed.)”</td>
<td>Color blindness, affecting approximately 8% of men and .5% of women, is a condition characterized by difficulty in telling one one color from another, most often hereditary but in some cases caused by disease. The majority of color-blind people cannot distinguish some shades of red and green, but those who cannot perceive those colors at all see red and green objects as yellow. There are people who cannot see color at all and perceive all objects in a range of black through gray to white. (Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common Errors in Paraphrasing

If you follow the sentence structure of your source, only changing words here and there, you are not paraphrasing but plagiarizing. This practice has often been accepted by teachers in reports that students have prepared in early grades and may not be recognized as plagiarism.

Inadequate Paraphrase, Classified as Plagiarism

Color blindness is a visual deficiency shown in a lack of ability to distinguish colors. Some degree of difficulty in perceiving colors is found in 8% of men and 0.5% of women, and is almost always an inherited sex-linked characteristic that is transmitted throughout females but recessive in them. . .
Example #2

**original:** Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes.  

**citation:** In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester 46-47).

**Plagiarized version:**

Students often use too many direct quotations when they take notes, resulting in too many of them in the final research paper. In fact, probably only about 10% of the final copy should consist of directly quoted material. So it is important to limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes.

**Examples of summarizing**

**Original text**

“visual defect resulting in the inability to distinguish colors. About 8% of men and 0.5% of women experience some difficulty in color perception. Color blindness is usually an inherited sex-linked characteristic, transmitted through, but recessive in, females. Acquired color blindness results from certain degenerative diseases of the eyes. Most of those with defective color vision are only partially color-blind to red and green, i.e., they have a limited ability to distinguish reddish and greenish shades. Those who are completely color-blind to red and green see both colors as a shade of yellow. Completely color-blind individuals can recognize only black, white, and shades of gray. (Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed.)

**Summary**

Color blindness, usually a sex-linked hereditary condition more common in men than women and sometimes the result of eye disease, involves limited ability or sometimes complete inability to tell red from green. In a much rarer form of color blindness, the individual sees no colors at all.

**Common Errors in Summarizing**

If your summary is as long as the original text, it is not a summary. It is important that your summary accurately represents the text; do not change the ideas of the original text by leaving out significant points.

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Example of Quoting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original text</th>
<th>Quotation, integrated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“visual defect resulting in the inability to distinguish colors. About 8% of men and 0.5% of women experience some difficulty in color perception. Color blindness is usually an inherited sex-linked characteristic, transmitted through, but recessive in, females. Acquired color blindness results from certain degenerative diseases of the eyes. Most of those with defective color vision are only partially color-blind to red and green, i.e., they have a limited ability to distinguish reddish and greenish shades. Those who are completely color-blind to red and green see both colors as a shade of yellow. Completely color-blind individuals can recognize only black, white, and shades of gray. (Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed.)”</td>
<td>Color blindness is a “visual defect resulting in the inability to distinguish colors” (Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed.). Most often it is a hereditary condition that involves only some shades of red and green, but people with complete red-green color blindness see yellow instead, and some people have no color perception at all. (Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common Errors in Quoting:
If you misquote your source, you are not making fully ethical use of that source. Be sure to closely check every word and punctuation mark in the original text. Do not quote very long passages; consider using a combination of quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing to represent the argument or information presented in the original text.