



## How to Paraphrase in Academic Writing

Plagiarism occurs when you use someone else’s words, thoughts, or ideas to support your claim without citing them properly. Often, plagiarism occurs accidentally when students fail to paraphrase correctly. To avoid plagiarism, it is critical to know how to paraphrase a source accurately. Whether you are borrowing a single phrase or a longer passage, you must acknowledge the original author.

### Before you begin your paraphrase:

- Keep keywords: names of theories, places, people – terms that the original author uses repeatedly in the original text.
- Focus on ideas: paraphrase the author’s ideas instead of replacing words with synonyms.
  - Simplify your explanation: Explain the ideas as if you were telling a friend who has not read the original text.
- Eliminate wordiness:
  - While adding to your vocabulary is beneficial, using too many words will weaken your paraphrase.

### Example (APA format):

Original	Poor Paraphrase	Better Paraphrase
“For a nation that’s undoubtedly well known for its cool climate, it seems somewhat surprising that Canadians invented the UV Index, a measure of the intensity of the sun’s ultraviolet radiation in the sunburn spectrum.” (Kylie, 2014, p. 1)	For a country that’s without a doubt known well for its cool weather, it is a little surprising that Canadians created the UV index, a measure of the sun’s ultraviolet radiation intensity in the sunburn spectrum (Kylie, 2014, p. 1).	Despite its reputation for colder weather, Canada created a way of measuring sunburn-producing ultraviolet radiation from the sun, now known as the UV Index (Kylie, 2014, p. 1).

### Example (MLA format):

Original	Poor Paraphrase	Better Paraphrase
“Thirdly, the social life outside the academic environment has a strong influence on academic integration.” (Rienties et al. 689)	Social life out of school has a big influence on academic integration (Rienties et al. 689).	Integrating into an academic environment is influenced greatly by students’ external social lives (Rienties et al. 689).

### Example (Chicago Manual of Style format):

Original	Poor Paraphrase	Better Paraphrase
“Traditional diets developed in countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea have been linked with lower rates of heart disease and other chronic conditions.” <sup>1</sup>	Traditional diets created in countries by the Mediterranean Sea have been connected with decreased rates of heart disease and another long-lasting conditions. <sup>2</sup>	A relation has been made between lowering rates of heart disease and conventional diets originating in Mediterranean countries. <sup>3</sup>

1. Patrick J. Skerrett, and Walter C. Willett, “Essentials of Healthy Eating: A Guide,” *J Midwifery Womens Health*, no. 6, (Oct 2012): 497.

2. Skerrett and Willett, 497.

3. Skerrett and Willett, 497.

## Avoiding Plagiarism

Below is an example of paraphrasing from *The Little, Brown Handbook* (shown in MLA citation format):

Source: Fowler, H R, Jane E. Aaron, and Murray McArthur. *The Little, Brown Handbook*. Don Mills, Ont: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998.

**Original:** “The character and mentality of the keepers may be of more importance in understanding prisons than the character and mentality of the kept” (Mitford 9).

**Plagiarism:** According to one critic of the penal system, the psychology of the kept may say less about prisons than the psychology of the keepers (Mitford 9).

*This is still plagiarism because it uses some of the original words without quotation marks.*

**Plagiarism:** One critic of the penal system maintains that the psychology of prison officials may be more informative about prisons than the psychology of the prisoners (Mitford 9).

*This is incorrect because it still plagiarizes Mitford’s sentence structure.*

**Correct:** Mitford holds that we may be able to learn less about prisons from the psychology of prisoners than from the psychology of prison officials (9).

**Remember, to paraphrase correctly you must change both the words *and* the sentence structure of the original.**

## The 5 Rs of Paraphrasing

### 1. Read the original passage and underline the main ideas.

Example: “People’s writing styles and the words they use are very distinct. It is generally easy to tell when someone has copied directly from a textbook as the language and the words used change from the writer’s normal style and vocabulary.” (RMIT University 1).

### 2. Rephrase these main ideas with different words.

Example: One’s way of writing is unique. It is not difficult to recognize when someone has copied another writer’s work because the language used is different from the writer’s usual form of expression.

### 3. Reorganize the order of these main ideas.

Example: Due how the uniqueness of everyone’s way of writing, it is not difficult to recognize when a writer has copied another writer’s work; the language used is noticeably different from the writer’s usual form of expression.

### 4. Remove any repetitive ideas. Capture the essential meaning of the passage.

Example: Due to the uniqueness of everyone’s writing, copied work is easily recognized ~~as it is different from a writer’s usual form of expression.~~

### 5. Revise your paraphrase, ensuring that it makes sense and has kept the original meaning.

**Original:** Example: People’s writing styles and the words they use are very distinct. It is generally easy to tell when someone has copied directly from a textbook as the language and the words used change from the writer’s normal style and vocabulary.

**Revised paraphrase:** Due to the uniqueness of individual written expression, copied work is easily recognized (RMIT University 1).