

PLAGIARISM & PARAPHRASING

Plagiarize (verb) – 1. To steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: use (another's production) without crediting the source. 2. To commit literary theft: present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source. (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plagiarize>)

- ❖ When using the exact words of an author—from a book, song, magazine, website, or other written source—one MUST place those words within quotation marks and credit the source of those words.
- ❖ *It is plagiarism to* use any of the following without acknowledging the original creator and source and without using quotation marks around direct quotes:
 - > results of another's research or material,
 - > specific arrangement of material,
 - > list of steps and conclusions in an experiment, or
 - > artistic concept.

Colleges take plagiarism ***very seriously*** and ***severe penalties*** may be imposed.

Paraphrase (noun) – A restatement of a text, passage, or work giving the meaning in another form. (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paraphrase>)

- ❖ *It is plagiarism to* rearrange pieces of someone else's material within one's own writing and claim it as one's own product, even if the original writer is acknowledged.
- ❖ One ***may*** use *shared language* or specialized common terminology used by others in the study of or practice of a subject (i.e., architectural, nursing, or art terms), without acknowledgment or quotation marks.
- ❖ One ***may*** summarize a reading as a whole and put it into one's own words. One ***may*** also modify the author's "language and structure and add material to fit the new context and purpose."



Some Paraphrasing Examples

© 1995, 2014 Daniel Kies. All rights reserved.

The following successful and unsuccessful paraphrases are based on the paragraph below. The first two paraphrases after the original passage demonstrates two *improper* ways of handling source material: (1) word-for-word plagiarism and (2) cut-and-paste plagiarism. Finally, the last example provides a model of a successful paraphrase. Each paraphrase is followed by an explanation of its strengths or weaknesses.

The Original Paragraph:

The linguistic criticism of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has focused primarily on Newspeak as a language and on Orwell's ideas about the relationship between language and thought. It has largely ignored, however, the literary language Orwell used in writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Indeed, the few critical remarks about Orwell's use of language have generally been negative—sometimes attributing the dull, monotonous, dry writing style to Orwell's career as a journalist or to the phlegmatic topic of his novel. Irving Howe, for example, writes that

the style of *1984*, which many readers take to be drab or uninspired or sweaty, would have been appreciated by someone like Defoe, since Defoe would have immediately understood how the pressures of Orwell's subject, like the pressures of his own, demand a gritty and hammering factuality. The style of *1984* is the style of a man whose commitment to a dreadful vision is at war with the nausea to which that vision reduces him. So acute is this conflict that delicacies of phrasing or displays of rhetoric come to seem frivolous—he has no time, he must get it all down. Those who fail to see this, I am convinced, have succumbed to the pleasant tyrannies of estheticism; they have allowed their fondness for a cultivated style to blind them to the urgencies of prophetic expression. The last thing Orwell cared about when he wrote *1984*, the last thing he should have cared about, was literature.

I believe those critical responses to Orwell—including Howe's defense of his style—are wrong.

(from *The Uses of Passivity*, Daniel Kies, 229)

Two Unsuccessful Paraphrases:

1. Word-for-word Plagiarism

The linguistic criticism of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* focuses mostly on Newspeak as a language and on Orwell's ideas about language and thought. The few critical remarks about Orwell's use of language have been bad, claiming that his poor writing style was due to Orwell's career as a journalist or the topic of his novel. Only the critic Irving Howe felt that Orwell's style would've been appreciated by someone like Defoe. Kies believes all those critics are wrong.

The red words are directly copied from the source. Notice that the writer has not only "borrowed" the original's ideas with no acknowledgment, he or she has maintained the author's method of expression and sentence structure. Even if the writer had acknowledged the source of these ideas, this passage would still be plagiarized because much of its exact wording comes from the original with no quotation marks to indicate that the language is the original's. It's not that using a single phrase such as "appreciated by someone like Defoe" without quotation marks constitutes plagiarism; it's the repeated use of exact wording and sentence structure without any quotation marks.

Placing quotation marks around all material directly taken from the original would make this paragraph so cluttered as to be unreadable. If a writer likes the ideas and the wording of the original this much, if it is important to the paper, and if it is stated more concisely in the original than it would be in a paraphrase or summary, then quote the original. Otherwise, paraphrase.

2. Cut-and-paste Plagiarism

Most critics who discuss the language of *1984* either focus primarily on Newspeak as a language or Orwell's ideas about the relationship between language and thought. The few who describe the novel's writing style have a negative reaction. They argue that its dreary style is a product of Orwell's career as a journalist or the phlegmatic topic of his novel. Even one critic's defense of Orwell's style seems wrong.

In the second example, the "cut-and-paste" plagiarism example, note the red phrases which have been borrowed from the original and shifted around. The original's structure has been modified to a certain extent by the writer, but numerous key phrases have been retained without quotation marks, and the source has not been credited.

A Legitimate Paraphrase:

An Example of a Good Paraphrase

In *The Uses of Passivity*, Kies argues that the critics' reactions to Orwell's writing style in *1984* are wrong. Most critics charge that the novel's style is "dry" and lifeless, attributing this either to Orwell's career as a journalist or to the novel's dreary topic. Even one critic's modest defense of Orwell's style strikes Kies as weak (229).

In the example of a legitimate paraphrase, the original ideas and specific language have been documented (by direct references to the author, by citations to his article, and by quotation marks where specific language has been used). Notice too that the original language and structure have been modified to fit this summary's own purpose.

This handout used material from . . . <http://papyr.com/hypertextbooks/comp2/samppara.htm>
and

http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Acknowledging_Sources.pdf

Some Tips

1. Read the passage to understand it as a whole. Don't try to **annotate**—yet.
2. **Annotate:** Make a few marginal notes (or on post-it notes). Underline/circle/highlight key phrases; ask questions.
3. Be selective. Unless your assignment is to do a formal or "literal" paraphrase, you usually don't paraphrase an entire passage; instead, choose and summarize ideas that help you make a point in your paper.
4. Think of what "your own words" would be if you were telling someone unfamiliar with your subject (your mother, your brother, a friend) what the original source said.
5. Read the text you want to paraphrase several times until you feel you understand it and can use your own words to restate it to someone else. Then, look away from the original and rewrite it in your own words.