Paraphrasing – The Big Picture

Paraphrasing is a complex skill that involves careful *attribution, interpretation,* and *integration* of the relevant existing research on your topic. Because graduate-level writing consistently requires referencing and synthesizing the work of others, it is important to develop paraphrasing skills to support your research and writing. This handout highlights principles and practices to help you develop these skills.

Attribution: Citations let us create a trail of information from one source of established information to another. Any time we gain information from a source, it is important to credit that source in the text, regardless of whether it is a paraphrase, which involves rephrasing the original to support your new argument, or a direct quote, which uses the exact words and quotation marks to reflect that it is taken verbatim.

Why do we cite?

- *Personal credibility as a researcher* — Distinguishing between our insights and those gained by others lets us appropriately mark our own area of expertise while giving credit where it is due.

- *Creating a credible academic record* — Because academic knowledge is constantly evolving, it is important to create a record that allows us to trace where knowledge was derived from so that we can understand the implications of refutations or expansion of earlier works.

- *Avoiding academic misconduct* — Because understanding whom and where knowledge came from is so crucial to creating trustworthy academic research, failure to adequately integrate and credit existing research is subject to penalties as described in the University's policies.

How do we cite?

- Please refer to the style guides or handouts relevant to your field or course's preferred citation style (e.g., APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, or journal-specific citation styles for publication).

Interpretation: In order to effectively paraphrase a study or result, it is important to be clear about both **the meaning of the original sentence** and **its relationship to key terms and concepts** in your field. Before you attempt to paraphrase, be sure you understand all the words in the sentence(s) you plan to paraphrase and what their relevance is within the study and its research question(s). Because becoming a graduate student involves joining the ongoing conversations in your field, each with its own conventions and terminology, one of the most efficient ways of developing strong paraphrases is to practice with others.

Practice Paraphrasing

Below are eight steps for practicing paraphrasing with a consultant or classmate:

1) Focus on one to three sentences of a text.
2) Read the isolated section to yourself a few times.
3) Read the text aloud to your partner.
4) Discuss the importance of the idea you are paraphrasing in the context of the paper.
5) Discuss the importance of the idea in the context of your class, research, or field.
6) Write down two or three possible restatements of the original text.
7) Compare your restatements with the isolated section from the original text.
8) Consider which of the restatements most accurately highlights the most relevant information.

Avoid Patchwork Plagiarism
There is a form of rewording that uses very few of the original words of the sentence but is **still considered plagiarism**. Simply rearranging the original words or exchanging key words for synonyms, without changing the structure of the sentence, is called patchwork plagiarism or mosaic paraphrase. This kind of rewording is not considered true paraphrasing because it duplicates the original work of others rather than effectively interpreting that work in the context of your new research and integrating it accordingly. This is often a weakness of AI paraphrasing tools as well. **Do not simply use a thesaurus or AI tool to paraphrase.**

Integration: Once you have cited and fully interpreted the information you want to include, the final step is integrating that information into the flow of your own writing. There are two parts to this process that support each other: *what you've discovered in the original source and why it's relevant to your reader.*

What is the key information?
The information that you plan to paraphrase was selected by you for a reason. Paraphrases do not simply summarize the paper or report an annotated bibliography. Instead, they highlight the most significant information from a sentence or short excerpt to help your reader understand the new argument you are developing in your own writing project.

For example, there are multiple ways to paraphrase the following idea:
> "The relationship between A and B is stable except where the inclusion of C results in a sharply decreasing incidence of B."

If your paper is focusing on variables A and B, you could report the following with appropriate citation:
> "The ratio of A and B remains consistent, except in cases where C is present."

If your paper is focusing on the impacts of variable C instead, you could highlight it this way with an appropriate citation:
> "Introducing C has been shown to disrupt the otherwise predictable relationship between A and B, where it notably decreases the incidence of B."

Why is it relevant to your paper?
The information you wish to include through your paraphrase exists in relationship to all other information on the topic. Is it a *new* finding? Or does it *support, challenge,* or *expand* existing claims? The organization of sections and paragraphs can help your reader to interpret your intentions. To reflect these relationships most accurately, we have to consider not only *what* we highlight, but *how*.

It can sometimes be challenging to know how to frame these relationships in writing. A great resource for learning these writing conventions is the **Manchester Academic Phrasebank**. You can find headings for Introducing Work, Referring to Sources, Describing Methods, Reporting Results, or Discussing Findings, as well as General Language Functions, each with further subsections that can help you find just the right way to phrase the relationship you are trying to describe.

- Find the phrase bank here: **https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/**