Help Centres – English Support

Paraphrasing Sources

What is paraphrasing? Paraphrasing refers to using your own words to present another person's ideas. When paraphrasing, you are changing the original source's language – vocabulary, sentence structure, order of ideas –while still conveying the original meaning.

Why should I paraphrase? Paraphrasing is used as an alternative to directly quoting a source. The benefit of paraphrasing is that it seamlessly integrates secondary source material into your essay through your own voice and tone without stylistic interference from the source material's writer. The technique also ensures that you have clearly understood the source itself while only including the most relevant parts of the source, which helps make your writing more concise.

Don't forget! Despite using your own words, you are still referencing another writer's ideas. This means that you still need to cite the original source after a paraphrase.

General advice when paraphrasing:

- Reread the original source several times, take notes, and then rewrite the relevant portion **in your own words** based on your understanding of the text: this way you will be paraphrasing the content, not simply the language, of the original source while only paraphrasing the portion of the source required to support the argument of your essay.

- Keep key terms from the original text, as changing them could alter the meaning of the source.

- Consider using signal phrases when introducing paraphrased information.

- Don't merely replace all the verbs, nouns and adjectives of the original sentences with synonyms: this can lead to awkward phrasing and result in a paraphrase of unnecessarily long length.

- Use a sentence structure and order of information that differs from the original source: this helps reduce the possibility of unintentionally plagiarizing the source