

How to Summarize and Paraphrase Correctly

Summarizing

Key points to consider

- Summarizing means **extracting** the most important information from a source and writing (or explaining) it in **your own words**. A summary is often much shorter than the original passage.
- While summarizing, you should **stay true to the original text** and represent the author's ideas **correctly**. Even if you disagree with something, you **cannot** change the author's ideas. **Remain objective and neutral.**
- Use attributive tags or **signal phrases** to indicate where the author's ideas are separated from yours. For example, "According to Smith..." or "Smith argues that..."
- While summarizing, think about how to express the ideas to someone else **without the text in front of you.**
- While summarizing, always cite your sources to avoid plagiarism.

Let's practice! Try to find out which one is plagiarized.

Original passage

"The rapid growth and accessibility of social networking websites has fundamentally changed the way people manage information about their personal and professional lives" (Garner and O'Sullivan, p. 113).

Example 1.	Example 2.
How people manage information online has been drastically altered due to the proliferation of social networking websites. (Garner & O'Sullivan, p. 113)	The rapid spawning and availability of social networking websites has completely changed the way people manage information about their personal and professional lives. (Garner and O'Sullivan, p. 113)

Example 2 is plagiarized! The writer has replaced certain words with their synonyms without changing the structure of the sentence. As a result, we are missing the writer's own voice in the summary. The first example, on the other hand, is changed enough to express the same idea in the author's words, and is not considered plagiarism.

Paraphrasing

Key points to consider

- Sometimes we read something and ask for help, saying “Can you please explain this?” In other words, we ask someone to interpret or restate the meaning, so that it’s clear to us.
- When paraphrasing, you are writing the author’s ideas and should restate them in your own words. It helps to further explain or simplify a passage that can be difficult to understand.
- Paraphrasing is important because it eliminates the use of direct quotes and shows how well you understood the text.
- While paraphrasing, avoid copying and pasting the text.
- While paraphrasing, don’t exchange simply a few words. If you merely replace words by their synonyms, the text is considered plagiarism.

Let’s practice! Try to find out which one is plagiarized.

Original passage

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. Lester, James D. Writing Research Papers. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.

Example 1.	Example 2.
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, 1976).	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.

Example 2 is plagiarized! The writer has changed the words, but the sentence structure is the same; therefore, it cannot be used without quotes and is considered plagiarism. Besides, the writer has cited the source in the first example, whereas there is no citation for the second example.