



**The Weissman Center for Leadership and the Liberal Arts  
The Speaking, Arguing, and Writing Program  
122 Porter Hall**

## **How to Paraphrase to Avoid Plagiarism**

A paraphrase is your own rendition of ideas put forth by another author regarding a certain topic. A paraphrase gives more information than a summary and must be cited properly. Not only will paraphrasing help you avoid plagiarism, it will also help you understand the material you are using as evidence to strengthen your point. Paraphrasing is important in avoiding a paper full of quotes, especially when parts of the quote are irrelevant.

### **How do I paraphrase without plagiarizing?**

Once you have chosen a passage from a text that supports the ideas in your paper:

- Reread the passage a few times to be sure that you know the material and the message clearly.
- Remove the original passage from your workspace, and write the information in your own words from the understanding you gained through rereading.
- Check your paraphrase against the original passage to be sure that you did not plagiarize. Some things you are specifically looking for are:
  - Repetition of unusual or technical phrases that you may not ordinarily think of as your own.
  - Change in sentence structure; avoid writing the same basic sentence and replacing key words with synonyms.
  - Interpretations or opinions introduced into the paraphrase. For example:
    - **Original source:** “Switching paths doesn’t imply a dilettante streak or a lack of work ethic; it happens all the time—up to fifteen times in the course of a lifetime, according to some estimates” –Kara C. Baskin, “Midcourse Correction: How to Get Back to Work (or Back to Better Work) at Midcareer,” *Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly* 90 (Winter 2007): 23.
    - **Paraphrase too close to the original:** According to Baskin, changing paths doesn’t mean a dilettante way or absence of work ethic, it is quite common. People change careers up to fifteen times in their lifetime according to statistics (23).
    - **A better paraphrase:** According to Baskin, it is not uncommon for people today to change careers many times throughout their life. This phenomenon does not mean that people lack seriousness about their jobs or careers (23).

If you are still worried about paraphrasing, do it twice! Paraphrase and cite original sources in your notes, then paraphrase and cite once again when writing your paper. Even after doing this, you should still refer to the original passages to be sure you did not plagiarize.

Sources:

Bakin, Kara C. “Midcourse Correction: How to Get Back to Work (or Back to Better Work) at Midcareer.” *Mount Holyoke Alumnae Quarterly* Winter 2007: 23-25.

Hacker, Diana. *Rules for Writers*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2000.

“Paraphrasing: Write in Your Own Words” *Purdue University Online Writing Lab at Purdue University*. Accessed November 3,

2005. [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_paraphr.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_paraphr.html)

Raimes, Ann. *Keys for Writers*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/go/saw>

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