

Summary and Paraphrase

Summary and paraphrase are two writing terms that confuse many writers. Students tend to use the two terms interchangeably, but summary and paraphrase are different. A primary difference is that summaries are shorter and less detailed than paraphrases. A writer may use summary or paraphrase because either element may integrate into the writer's original work more smoothly than a direct quotation.

SUMMARY

WHAT IS A SUMMARY?

- Your own words and sentence structures express the author's ideas in a form substantially shorter than what appeared in the author's original text.
- It focuses on the main or central ideas presented in a text.
- It does not include your personal opinions.
- The source is cited.

HOW DO YOU WRITE A SUMMARY?

- Read the text that you might want to summarize; then put it away.
- Explain what you've just read to yourself; this is a good basis for a summary.
- Write in your own words the central ideas and omit examples or lengthy explanations.
- Integrate those sentences into your own sentences that precede and follow the summary.
- Compare what you have written with the original text.
 - Are the main ideas still the same?
 - Have you kept the author's general ideas and purpose?
 - Have you directly copied any words or phrases from the original text? If so, you need to either rewrite those parts or enclose them in double quotation marks.

EXAMPLES

ORIGINAL QUOTATION:

Every day we are bombarded with images—pictures on billboards, commercials on television, graphs and charts in newspapers and textbooks, to name just a few examples. Most images slide by without our even noticing them, or so we think. But images, sometimes even more than text, can influence us covertly. Their creators have purposes, some worthy, some not, and understanding those purposes requires that we think critically (Aaron 64).

SUMMARY (MLA):

The things we see around us, whether we realize it or not, can affect us greatly, so we need to be aware of the meanings of the visualizations surrounding us (Aaron 64).

SUMMARY (APA):

The things we see around us, whether we realize it or not, can affect us greatly, so we need to be aware of the meanings of the visualizations surrounding us (Aaron, 2004, p. 64).

Note: The examples are summaries because they reduce the number of sentences to one, but the author's general idea and purpose have been retained.

PARAPHRASE

WHAT IS A PARAPHRASE?

- A paraphrase is a restatement of someone else's complete idea in your own words.
- It is about the same length as the original text.
- Sentence structure and wording are entirely altered.
- The source is cited.
- If words or phrases are quoted, they should be enclosed in double quotation marks.

HOW DO YOU WRITE A PARAPHRASE?

- Read the original text; then put it away.
- State the author's idea in your own words; paraphrases are usually one sentence in length at most.
- The sequence of ideas and the sentence structure or syntax need to be different from the source.
- Compare your paraphrase with the original. Make sure that the author's meaning is still clear and that any words or phrases that have been copied directly are within quotation marks.

EXAMPLES

ORIGINAL QUOTATION:

Although the amount of writing on the job varies by type of employment and rank, many workers say that when they were in school, they underestimated the amount of writing they would need to do in their jobs (Anson 7).

PARAPHRASE (MLA):

Many employees are realizing that their assumptions about writing less once outside of academia were incorrect (Anson 7).

PARAPHRASE (APA):

Many employees are realizing that their assumptions about writing less once outside of academia were incorrect (Anson & Schwegler, 2003, p. 7).

Note: Writing paraphrases is a difficult skill and should be used by skilled writers. You should consider quoting material rather than paraphrasing it as the risk of plagiarism within a paraphrase is higher.