

# Paraphrasing

- is the use of another's ideas to enhance your own work
- rewrite in your own words the ideas taken from the source
- avoid excessive reliance on quotations to demonstrate that you understand the source author's argument
- always has a different sentence structure and word choice
- when done well, it is much more concise than the original
- indicate the source of the paraphrase and help integrate the borrowed ideas into your own work such as "Werner Sollors, in *Beyond Ethnicity*, argues that....". Because a paraphrase is your restatement of a borrowed idea, it is not set within quotation marks
- though the ideas may be borrowed, your writing must be original; simply changing a few words or rearranging words or sentences is not paraphrasing.
- In fact, it's plagiarism, a severe academic offense that can result in expulsion from the university

(Cf. Matthew Hedstrom, <http://uwc.fac.utexas.edu>, retrieved 2006)

- **Original Passage:**

“They desire, for example, virtue and the absence of vice, no less really than pleasure and the absence of pain.”

- **Source:** Mill, John Stuart. “Utilitarianism.” *On Liberty and Other Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. Quote is from page 169.

- **Paraphrase:**

People want morality just as much as they want happiness.

- **Explanation:**

This paraphrase is an accurate summary of the above passage, but is incorrectly paraphrased because it does not cite the source of its main ideas. The author of this paraphrase has plagiarized the ideas of another.

- **Original Passage:**
- “To the young American architects who made the pilgrimage, the most dazzling figure of all was Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus School. Gropius opened the Bauhaus in Weimar, the German capital, in 1919. It was more than a school; it was a commune, a spiritual movement, a radical approach to art in all its forms, a philosophical center comparable to the Garden of Epicurus.”
- **Source:** Wolfe, Tom. *From Bauhaus to Our House*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1981. Quote is from page 10.
- **Paraphrase:**
- As Tom Wolfe notes, to young American architects who went to Germany, the most dazzling figure was Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus School (10). Gropius opened the Bauhaus in the German capital of Weimar in 1919. It was, however, more than a school; it was a commune, a spiritual movement, a philosophical center like the Garden of Epicurus.
- **Explanation:** This excerpt is not a paraphrase at all; it is too similar to the source. Rather than summarizing the ideas, it uses the same words and structure as the original. This author has committed plagiarism by misrepresenting another’s work as his own.

- **Original Passage:**
- “The Republican Convention of 1860, which adopted planks calling for a tariff, internal improvements, a Pacific railroad and a homestead law, is sometimes seen as a symbol of Whig triumph within the party. A closer look, however, indicates that the Whig’s triumph within the party was of a very tentative nature.”
- **Source:** Foner, Eric. *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970. Quote is from page 175.
- **Paraphrase:**
- Contrary to many historians, Eric Foner argues that the Republican platform of 1860 should not be understood as an indication of Whig dominance of the party (175).
- **Explanation:**
- This paraphrase is properly cited and represents an accurate and concise summary of the source.

- **The Source**
- “How important is our power of nonanalytical thought to the practice of science? It’s the most important thing we have, declares the Princeton physicist historian, Thomas Kuhn, who argues that major breakthroughs occur only after scientists finally concede that certain physical phenomena cannot be explained by extending the logic of old theories. Consider the belief that the sun and the planets move around the earth, which reigned prior to 1500. This idea served nicely for a number of centuries, but then became too cumbersome to describe the motions of heavenly bodies. So the Polish astronomer Copernicus invented a new reality that was based on a totally different ‘paradigm’ or model—that the earth and planets move around the sun” (Hoover, 124).

- **Word-for-word plagiarism**
- Non-analytic thought is considered very important to the practice of science by Princeton physicist historian Thomas Kuhn who claims that major breakthroughs happen only when scientists finally concede that some physical phenomena defy explanation by extending the logic of old theories. One idea which served nicely for many centuries but then became too cumbersome was the belief that the sun and planets revolved around the earth. This was held prior to 1500 until Copernicus invented a new reality: the earth and planets move around the sun.

- *The underlined words are directly copies from the source.*
- *Notice that the writer has not only “borrowed” Hoover’s ideas with no acknowledgment, he or she has maintained the author’s method of expression and sentence structure.*
- *Even if the student-writer had acknowledged Hoover as the source of these ideas, this passage would still be plagiarized because much of its exact wording comes from Hoover with no quotation marks to indicate that the language is Hoover’s.*
- *It’s not that using a single phrase such as “prior to 1500” without quotation marks constitutes plagiarism; it’s the repeated use of exact wording and sentence structure without any quotation marks. If, for example, you used just that one phrase without quotation marks—a phrase whose language isn’t particularly distinctive—and acknowledged the source of the ideas, that would be fine. If quotation marks were placed around all material directly taken from Hoover, this paragraph would be so cluttered as to be unreadable. If you like the ideas and the wording of the original this much, if it is important to your paper, and if it is stated more concisely in the original than it would be in your paraphrase or summary, then quote the original.*



- **The Mosaic**
- Intuition plays an important role in scientific progress. Thomas Kuhn believes that nonanalytical thought allows scientists to break through the logic of old theories to formulate new paradigms to explain a new reality. Copernicus' invention of one such model (a reversal of the Ptolemaic view which reigned prior to 1500 claimed that the earth and planets rotate around the sun.
- **Note the underlined phrases which have been borrowed from the original and shifted around. Hoover's structure has been modified to a certain extent by the writer, but numerous key phrases have been retained without quotation marks, and the source has not been credited.**

- **A Legitimate Paraphrase**
- In “Zen: Technology and the Split Brain,” Hoover suggests that the power of intuition—that suprarational half of our intelligence—is more important to scientific advancement than the function of the left hemisphere of our brain—the rigidly logical and processor-oriented portion. He cites the revolution in thinking created by Copernicus’ new paradigm of cosmic movement, a leap in understanding made possible only by the creative invention of “a new reality” after rational consideration of the old reality had exhausted itself (124).
- **Hoover’s ideas and specific language have been documented (by direct references to the author, by citations to his article, and by quotation marks where specific language has been used). Notice too that Hoover’s language and structure have been modified to fit this student-writer’s own purpose.**