

Paraphrasing and Summarizing

Paraphrasing is when you rewrite a text or passage in your own words using different vocabulary and sentence structure than the original source without changing the original meaning. Summarizing also involves restating a text in your own words. However, a summary only restates the main points, and, therefore, is usually much shorter than the original.

Paraphrasing and summarizing tips

- Read the source material several times and take notes as you read.
- Identify any words from the original that are essential terminology and cannot or should not be changed.
- Check your understanding of any unfamiliar words and concepts in a dictionary.
- Before writing your paraphrase or summary, jot down the main idea of the passage. You might imagine that you are explaining the passage to a friend or family member. What are the author's main points? What is their conclusion? This can help you not only confirm your understanding of the text, but also figure out what "your own words" actually are.
- Write your paraphrase or summary without looking at the source.
- Compare your paraphrase or summary to the original to ensure it accurately conveys the main ideas in your own words and revise it if necessary.
- Integrate the paraphrase or summary into your assignment, making sure it is properly cited.

Examples

Original Text

History is about trying to understand the past in a critical way, its negative as well as its positive features. It is a dynamic process, not a static one, and the history unfolding before our eyes, the present, is part of that process and informs our understanding of the past. History is not a jigsaw puzzle which can be completed and put away, and the accuracy of any historical interpretation is always open to reinterpretation.

Source: Conway, H., & Roenisch, R. (2014). *Understanding architecture: An introduction to architecture and architectural history*. Routledge.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cbu/detail.action?docID=5121758>.

Paraphrase

Conway and Roenisch (2014) state that history is an ever-evolving discipline. As time passes, historians conceptualize of historical events in new and different ways.

Original Text

When the Second World War ended, millions of Britons took to the streets to celebrate. After six years of suffering, their joy was understandable, but the cost of victory was huge. 264,000 servicemen and 90,000 civilians had been killed in the war. The industrial and commercial centres of cities and towns, in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as in England, had been destroyed in the blitz. Much of Britain's housing stock and physical infrastructure – railways, roads, schools and hospitals – had suffered severe bomb damage. Basic food-stuffs were in short supply, while industry faced disabling shortages of raw materials, machinery and markets.

Source: Davies, A. (2000). From imperial to post-imperial Britain. In Davies & Sinfield, A. (Eds.), *British culture of the post-war: An introduction to literature and society 1945-1999* (pp. 1-8). Routledge.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=570366&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Original Text

There are many Indigenous nations in what is called Canada, and each nation has its own unique history as a result of colonization. Reconciliation does not work as a one-size-fits-all remedy for colonial trauma, nor can Indigenous history be treated as the study of a single, homogeneous group if it is to do the many unique nations it discusses justice. The push to study individual nations has produced brilliant scholarship on regional – though many Indigenous academics would call these national – scales, and may hold some answers to questions about how to “do” reconciliation in a more adequate way.

Source: Peters, M. (2019). The future is Mi'kmaq: Exploring the merits of nation-based histories as the future of Indigenous history in Canada. *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* 48(2), 206-216.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/aca.2019.0017>

Paraphrase

Britain experienced significant social, economic, and infrastructural damages following World War II. Despite the allies' triumph, casualties numbered in the hundreds of thousands, city centres across the British Empire were devastated, and food and manufacturing resources became scarce (Davies, 2000).

Paraphrase

By focusing their academic analyses on specific Indigenous nations, instead of regarding the many distinct Indigenous groups in Canada as one uniform entity, scholars can better facilitate effective reconciliation (Peters, 2019).