

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

Your body has many kinds of cells, each specialized for a specific purpose. Just as a home is made from a variety of building materials, the human body is constructed from many cell types. For example, epithelial cells protect the surface of the body and cover the organs and body cavities within. Bone cells help to support and protect the body. Cells of the immune system fight invading bacteria. Additionally, red blood cells carry oxygen throughout the body. Each of these cell types plays a vital role during the growth, development, and day-to-day maintenance of the body. In spite of their enormous variety, however, all cells share certain fundamental characteristics.

Source: Fowler, S., Roush, R., & Wise, J. (2013). *Concepts of biology*. OpenStax.
<https://openstax.org/details/books/concepts-biology>

Paraphrase

While the body is made up of many different types of cells that serve a diverse array of functions, all of these cells have some essential features in common (Fowler et al., 2013).

Original Text

The study of neuroscience has taught us that the brain is a complicated organ with several connection routes, both between different bodily organs and within itself. Some of those connections communicate information down towards the body, such as signals that allow us to control the movements of our muscles or to change the activity of our internal organs. Other connections ascend into the brain, conveying all sorts of information from the world around us into a representation of our surroundings. Still, other routes communicate between brain areas, such as when the sudden detection of a threat passes through our visual system and turns into a “get ready” signal that then prepares the rest of our body for conflict. Because of this complex system of communication, the nervous system can be thought of as a series of highways and roads that connect different cities (organs).

Source: Hedges, V. (2022). *Introduction to neuroscience*. Michigan State University.
<https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/1303>

Original Text

Genetic material of all living organisms is transferred from parents to progeny, thus forming the basis of hereditary traits. Genes, the simplest units of heredity, are transferred to the next generation following a set of basic genetic rules. Since their discovery in the mid-19th century by Gregor Mendel, these fundamental laws have been exploited extensively by breeders in order to produce and combine desired traits in the progeny, and by researchers to study mechanisms of heredity, as well as other aspects of biology.

Source: Hlavova, M., Turoczy, Z., & Busova, K. (2015). Improving microalgae for biotechnology — From genetics to synthetic biology. *Biotechnology Advances* 33(6), 1194-1203. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biotechadv.2015.01.009>

Paraphrase

Hedges (2022) states that the brain communicates by sending messages to organs, muscles, and other parts of the body, as well as different areas within the brain itself.

Paraphrase

In the 1800s, Gregor Mendel identified the rules by which genes – and genetic traits – are passed down from parents to offspring (Hlavova et al., 2015).