

How to paraphrase and summarize without plagiarizing

Paraphrasing and summarizing involve explaining the ideas from a source in your own voice. When paraphrasing and summarizing, it is important to avoid **copying** and **patch writing**.

Copying is taking sentences and/or phrases from the source and putting them in your paper word-for-word.

Patch writing involves copying, as above, and then changing, cutting, or adding words and phrases. Patch writing is often unclear and poorly integrated into the rest of the paper. It also tends to lead to plagiarism.

In order to avoid copying and patch writing, follow these steps:

1. Read the source and make sure you understand the key ideas that you wish you to summarize or paraphrase. If needed, use a dictionary and/or seek help from a tutor or teacher. You cannot paraphrase or summarize a source if you do not understand it well.
2. Take notes, if you wish. This can be especially useful for longer sources. Taking notes generally results in better absorption of the ideas than highlighting or underlining alone.
3. Put the original text someplace where you can't see it, or turn it over. If it's an electronic source, minimize the page or switch to a different tab. Do not copy-paste text into your paper and then try to paraphrase/summarize it. This often leads to copying and/or patch writing.

If you need to keep track of your electronic/web sources, copy-paste the links into a separate document. You can then write notes under the links.

4. Now that the source is out of sight, explain the ideas in writing. Because you cannot see the original, you will naturally write in your own voice instead of copying or patch-writing. It can be useful to set aside concerns about mechanics and word choice and write a rough draft of your explanation, leaving editing for later.

As you write, include phrases to indicate that you are explaining someone else's ideas.

5. Once you have a rough draft of your paraphrase/summary, check it for:
 - a. Accuracy: Are you representing the author's ideas accurately ?
 - b. Signal phrases: Are you making it clear whose ideas these are and giving proper attribution (including citation)?
 - c. Mechanics and word choice: Is the grammar and punctuation correct? Is the meaning clear?