

Paraphrasing Effectively

Paraphrasing is defined as capturing a specific claim, stance, or fact by rewriting it in language that is different from the original source in which it was found. This practice is different from **quoting** in which you would take the information word for word from the original source. Both a paraphrase and a quotation need to be cited according to the citation method required of your discipline.

There are a variety of reasons why you paraphrase in an academic essay:

1. You may need to condense an excessively long passage from the source.
2. You may need to simplify the language of the original passage for your reader.
3. Paraphrasing a passage suggests that the information is of lesser importance than something that is quoted.
4. The information may be general background information needed to understand an upcoming quote.
5. It is an expectation of your discipline that you paraphrase rather than quote.

Let's consider the following quoted passage cited in APA format:

“Probability sampling is a method of sampling that utilizes some form of random selection, whereas convenience sampling is a technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (e.g. inviting through advertisements)” (van der Deijl, Etman, Kamphuis, & van Lenthe, 2014, p. 4).

To paraphrase this quote, you would need to maintain the same ideas, but significantly change the grammatical structure of the sentence. Doing so is considered a **fair paraphrase**. You would not use quotation marks with a paraphrase because you are not taking anything word for word from the source:

Using a random sample selection process is referred to as probability sampling while choosing individuals based on how close they are to the examiner is called convenience sampling (van der Deijl, Etman, Kamphuis, & van Lenthe, 2014, p. 4).

In a paraphrase, certain words may need to stay the same from the original source. In the above example, the terms “probability sampling” and “convenience sampling” are technical terms that cannot be changed. A paraphrase may be as long as the original passage, but it can also be shorter.

When paraphrasing, writers often make use of **signal phrase**, short statements typically preceding a paraphrase that give credit to the authors of the source. These are also called **attributive tags**. Here's how the above example would look if you used these:

According to van der Deijl, Etman, Kamphuis, and van Lenthe (2014), using a random sample selection process is referred to as probability sampling while choosing individuals based on how close they are to the examiner is called convenience sampling (p. 4).

One trap that students sometimes fall into is **patchworking**, which occurs when students keep the same grammatical structure of the original source and simply change a few words around. This practice is considered plagiarism. For example:

Probability sampling is a method of sampling that uses a form of random selection, whereas convenience sampling is a process where subjects are chosen because of their convenient proximity to the researcher (i.e. inviting through advertisements) (van der Deijl, Etman, Kamphuis, & van Lenthe, 2014, p. 4).

Remember to paraphrase, not patchwork. The skill is essential when utilizing the APA format, especially. In becoming an expert at paraphrasing, you will be able to demonstrate your ability to read, process, and explain information that you have learned.

References:

- van der Deijl, M., Etman, A., Kamphuis, C., & van Lenthe, F. (2014). Participation levels of physical activity programs for community-dwelling older adults: a systemic review. *BMC Public Health*, 14 (1301), n.p. doi: 10.1186/1471-2458-14-1301