

Examples of Use of Others' Work

Choose a section(s) of text from a relevant source(s). Finding a primary literature source and a website source is good, as this reinforces that all sources must be properly cited, whether they are academic literature or not. Have students create several versions including correct paraphrasing and summarizing. Ask students to randomly switch papers and analyze each others' writing:

1. Is this a paraphrase or a summary?
2. Have the ideas from the original work been correctly captured in the words of the student writer, or
3. Is the new writing simply copying and shifting/substituting words?
4. Has the original source been cited?
5. If any original text (word per word) was used, is it quoted and attributed?
6. If any original text was quoted, does the use of the quote highlight a particular phrase that is essential in the paraphrase or summary, or is the quote an example of "they could say it better than I could rewrite it."

Here is an example of what this exercise might produce:

Original Text:

"The changing climate impacts society and ecosystems in a broad variety of ways. For example climate change can increase or decrease rainfall, influence agricultural crop yields, affect human health, cause changes to forests and other ecosystems, or even impact our energy supply. Climate-related impacts are occurring across regions of the country and across many sectors of our economy. Many state and local governments are already preparing for the impacts of climate change through "adaptation," which is planning for the changes that are expected to occur."

(www.epa.gov/climatechange/impacts-adaptation accessed 11Aug15)

Badly Paraphrased and Quoted Text:

The impacts of climate change affect "society and ecosystems in a broad variety of ways." Across the country and the economy, climate change impacts "rainfall, agricultural crop yields, human health, forests and other ecosystems, even our energy supply." "Adaptation" is the way state and local governments prepare for climate change (www.epa.gov 2015).

What's Wrong:

Excessive quoting from the original source is not needed to convey the main points. There is nothing unique or noteworthy about the original text, therefore quoting from it is an inappropriate way to paraphrase. The second quote actually changes the original text. While not altering the meaning, any quote that deletes words needs an ellipsis where words have been removed: Across the country and the economy, climate change impacts "rainfall, ... agricultural crop yields, ... human health, ... forests and other ecosystems, ... even ... our energy supply." Because there are several sentences containing quotes, it is better to name the source

upfront, as in: According to the Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov 2015), the impacts of climate change affect “society and ecosystems...

Badly Paraphrased Text:

A changing climate affects ecosystems and people in many ways. For example, climate change can increase or decrease rainfall, affect human health and change farm yield, and occur across many sectors of the economy and regions of the country. Governments both state and local are already “adapting” to climate change impacts.

What’s Wrong:

Changing individual words, or deleting or rearranging words or phrases isn’t paraphrasing, it’s copying and adjusting. The goal is to read, understand and translate the idea(s) into your own words, not to massage the words of others. There is no citation, thus the original source (EPA website) is lost and the reader is led to believe these are the ideas and syntheses of the student.

Well Paraphrased Text:

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov 2015), the impacts of a changing climate affect the natural world and the human economy, from agriculture to health to energy supply. Adaptation is proactive planning for climate change impacts. Governments at a range of spatial scales (local, state, national) engage in climate adaptation.

What’s Right:

The ideas and some relevant examples are abstracted from the original and the source is given full credit.

Summarized Text:

Expected climate change impacts require proactive planning on the part of governments at all spatial scales (EPA 2015).

What’s Right:

The main points are abstracted from the original, and the source is given full credit.

Citation Included in Synthesized Text:

A range of government agencies, from local to national, are already drawing up plans to respond to the expected impacts of a changing climate, from sea level rise to ocean acidification to changing fire conditions to human health affects (EPA 2015, NOAA 2015, USFS 2015).

What’s Right:

A central idea from the original source (EPA) is blended with similar ideas from other sources and all are given credit.

Adapted from Indiana University Bloomington Writing Tutorial Services materials on how to recognize acceptable and unacceptable paraphrases:

www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml