

Paraphrasing vs Summarizing

Summary: Brief and broad account of the main points of a source text.

Paraphrase: Specific, detailed account of source information.

	Paraphrasing	Summarizing	
In your own words	√	√	Make sure this is truly written in your own voice. Don't put the source in your own words line-by-line from the original text.
Shorter than original source	√	√	Summaries are usually shorter than paraphrases.
Details / Specific info	√		Paraphrasing is more commonly used in academic writing than summarizing, because academic writing usually gets specific.
Main ideas / Broad points		√	

Whenever you are referencing a source, you are doing so for your own purposes. As in, your own paper has its own point—you aren't duplicating the main point of the source text. So, your paraphrase or summary should be written with your own paper's main point in mind. Keeping focus on your own main point will help you choose:

- Whether to paraphrase or summarize
- Which information to emphasize
- Whether some information can be left out
- How to organize the information

How to Paraphrase

An effective paraphrase accurately represents the author's ideas in your own words and sentence structures. If you quote some of the author's words within your paraphrase, always enclose them in quotation marks. Thanks to the UCF University Writing Center's "Plagiarism and Misuse of Sources" for the following examples.

Original Source

Argument is very much a part of what we do every day: We confront a public issue, something that's open to dispute, and we take a stand and support what we think and feel with what we believe are good reasons. Seen in this way, argument is very much like conversation. By this, I mean that making an argument entails providing good reasons to support your viewpoint, as well as counterarguments, and recognizing how and why readers

might object to your ideas. The metaphor of conversation emphasizes the social nature of writing.

From Stuart Greene's "Argument as Conversation: The Role of Inquiry in Writing a Researched Argument".

Misuse of Source

Using the Author's Words

In the following passage, the writer attempts to cite the source, but it is "misuse of sources" because the writer relies too heavily on the author's words (underlined).

In his essay "Argument as Conversation: The Role of Inquiry in Writing a Researched Argument," Stuart Greene points out that argument is what we do every day. When we confront a public issue, something that's open to disagreement, we take a stand and defend what we think and feel with good reasons. In other words, good arguments require providing good reasons to support your viewpoint, as well as counterarguments, and recognizing how and why others might object to your ideas. Writing, asserts, Greene, is social, like conversation (145).

Using the Author's Sentence Structures

Although the following paraphrase uses the writer's own words, it is another example of "misuse of sources" because it follows the author's sentence structures (underlined) too closely.

In his essay "Argument as Conversation: The Role of Inquiry in Writing a Researched Argument," Stuart Greene points out that argument is central to what we do everyday: We tackle a controversial subject, something that people disagree about, and we stake out a position and defend our views with reasons to support them. To put it another way, argument is similar to conversation. In Greene's view, making an argument requires good reasons to defend your views, as well as opposing points, and acknowledging how and why others might disagree. The idea of conversation highlights that writing is a social activity (145).

Effective Paraphrase

Below is a paraphrase that expresses the author's ideas effectively and includes a brief quotation.

In his essay "Argument as Conversation: The Role of Inquiry in Writing a Researched Argument," Stuart Greene compares academic writing to joining a conversation. Just as conversation is central to our everyday lives, so is argument. Whenever we tackle a controversial issue, we support our viewpoints with reasons. Good arguments also anticipate and seek to understand opposing views. "The metaphor of conversation," says Greene, "emphasizes the social nature of writing" (145).