

**What is paraphrasing?** Paraphrasing is restating a text's ideas in your own words (without adding your opinion). The author's meaning is kept, but your words are used.

**Why is paraphrasing important?** Paraphrasing helps you understand and remember what you read. It helps you clarify an author's ideas, create study guides, and prevent plagiarism (using someone else's words and ideas without clearly acknowledging the source of that information).

**How is paraphrasing different from summarizing?**

To the untrained eye, a paraphrase and a summary may look alike. However, there are differences.

- A summary is shorter than the original text.
- A **paraphrase** can be shorter or longer than the original.
- A summary eliminates details, examples, and supporting points.
- A **paraphrase** describes the original text in different words. It does not leave out details.

## Paraphrasing Effectively

- **Pay attention to exact meanings and relationships among ideas.** Read the material through entirely to get the author's meaning clear in your mind.
- **Change the words but never the meaning.** Paraphrasing is about restating what the author says. Save your own ideas for another time.
- **Use these clues to help develop an accurate paraphrase:**
  1. **Paraphrase in chunks.** Don't try to paraphrase word-by-word; work with phrases and ideas instead. Once you have the major thoughts and relationships in place, it's easier to fill in single words.
  2. **Look for vocabulary words, subjects, or proper nouns that cannot be changed or left out.** Without these words, the meaning of the paraphrase will change completely. It may help to circle specialized words that need to be included in your paraphrase.
  3. **Look away to write your paraphrase.** Read the author's original sentences, then look away and write your own sentence. Then reread the original and add anything you missed.
  4. **Look for keywords that can be changed and find alternatives.** Find other words and phrases that have similar meanings that can be used to replace the keywords in the text.
  5. **Combine the original sentences.** If you can combine the author's sentences to make your paraphrase shorter, do so. Just make sure that you do not change the meaning or leave out key information.
  6. **Make the end the beginning.** You can often open your paraphrase with content that the author puts at the end of the text. If the author's final sentence summarizes the paragraph, it may be a good start for your paraphrase.

### Good or Bad?

To write a good paraphrase, borrow only the idea conveyed by the author. Express his/her opinion in your own words, in your own way.

A bad paraphrase is one in which you simply substitute certain words with their synonyms, while keeping the structure of the author's original.

# Sample of Accurate Paraphrasing

## Original Passage

The Lomonosov Ridge is 1,100 miles long, about the distance from San Francisco to Denver, and rises about 10,000 feet from the floor of the Arctic Ocean. Geologists think the ridge might have broken away from a continent about 55 million years ago and remained near the North Pole while other landmasses drifted away. Moran and other scientists chose the ridge for potential drilling during a 1991 cruise during which they crossed the North Pole. The site was intriguing for the fact that no one had ever drilled the seafloor for a core there because of sea ice that drifts around like pieces of a massive jigsaw puzzle.

(Source: Rozell, N. (2005). A fern grows in the Arctic Ocean. Alaska Science Forum Article #1773.)

## Accurate Paraphrase:

Climbing 10,000 feet above the floor of the Arctic Ocean, the Lomonosov Ridge stretches 1,100 miles in length: roughly the distance between San Francisco and Denver. Geologists believe that it may be what remains of a continent that separated and moved away from the North Pole around 55 million years ago. Moran and her colleagues, knowing that the shifting sea ice in the Arctic Ocean had prevented others from having ever drilled there, selected the Lomonosov Ridge location as a future core-sampling site on a 1991 excursion across the North Pole.

**Why is this a good paraphrase?** The word choices and sentence structures are not the same, yet the information has remained the same. The paraphrase keeps the names of places and people, as well as specific terms like “geologists,” “sea ice,” “continent,” and “core.” An example of change in structure is combining the last two sentences. Likewise, the phrase “sea ice that drifts around like pieces of a massive jigsaw puzzle” is replaced with “shifting sea ice.”

## Inaccurate Paraphrase:

In 1991, Moran and her colleagues, convinced that the core samples retrieved would reveal startling new geologic information, chose to drill the Arctic Ocean seafloor near the 1,100 mile long Lomonosov Ridge, a left over relic of continents breaking up and moving away from the North Pole some 55 million years ago.

**Why is this inaccurate?** In this example, the wording and sentence structure are different; however, the meaning of the original passage has been changed. The paraphrase changes facts and makes conclusions that are simply not true. Look closely: the paraphrase changes the drilling location and adds that the scientists were convinced that drilling “would reveal startling new geologic information.”

## Inappropriate Paraphrase:

The 1,100 miles long Lomonosov Ridge, about the same distance from San Francisco to Denver, rises about 10,000 feet from the floor of the Arctic Ocean. Scientists think the ridge may have broken away from another continent about 55 million years ago, remaining near the North Pole while the rest of the landmass drifted away. Moran and other scientists chose this ridge for drilling on a cruise in 1991 in which they crossed the North Pole. They were intrigued by the fact that no one had ever drilled the seafloor there for a core because of sea ice drifting around like massive jigsaw puzzle pieces.

**Why is this inappropriate?** In this example, the wording and sentence structure are too close to the original for it to be fairly called a paraphrase. This could be considered plagiarism.

**Further explanation and activities for Accurate Paraphrasing can be found in the following texts:**

Flemming, Loraine. *Reading Keys*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2014. (See pages 15-18, 22, 245-251 & 263)

McWhorter, Kathleen T. *Reading Across the Disciplines: College Reading and Beyond*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. San Francisco: Pearson Education, 2012. (See pages 118-121)

Spears, Deanne. *Improving Reading Skills: Contemporary Readings for College Students*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010. (See pages 300-302)

Samples taken from : <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/researchsources/includingsources/paraphrasing/accurateexample.htm>