Quoting and Paraphrasing

The Center

There are multiple ways to incorporate other writer's work into your own writing. Whether it’s writing a research paper, literary analysis, or lab report, you will be asked to directly quote sources and paraphrase them. Knowing the difference is the key to avoiding what we call the dreaded P-word: PLAIGIARISM!

What are the differences?

Quotations must be identical to the original, using a brief and significant part of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author.

Paraphrasing involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage.

Remember that when you use sources, those are another person’s ideas. You are not merely using that person’s words; you are giving them credit for their IDEAS! Would you want your ideas stolen? No way! 😊

What are the similarities?

Whether quoting a source directly or putting source information into your own words, you must provide source information. For APA style, you typically use the last name of the author, the date, and the page number.

Paraphrasing in a Nutshell

✓ Paraphrasing is NOT merely rearranging words from a passage.
✓ Paraphrasing IS showing you understand the ideas by putting them in your own words.
✓ Paraphrasing IS using synonyms when appropriate and without changing the meaning.
✓ Paraphrasing is NOT coming up with new words for shared language. Shared language includes things like conventional designations
(physician’s assistant, chronic low-back pain, instructional associate) and technical terms and phrases of a discipline (reduplication, cognitive domain, material culture, organic chemistry).

Now let’s look at an example.

**Paraphrasing versus (uh-oh!) the P-Word**

The following passage is from “The social context of critical care clinical judgment” by S.K. Chase (1995).

Critical care nurses function in a hierarchy of roles. In this open heart surgery unit, the nurse manager hires and fires the nursing personnel. The nurse manager does not directly care for patients but follows the progress of unusual or long-term patients. On each shift a nurse assumes the role of resource nurse. This person oversees the hour-by-hour functioning of the unit as a whole, such as considering expected admissions and discharges of patients, ascertaining that beds are available for patients in the operating room, and covering sick calls. They are the most experienced of all the staff nurses. The nurse clinician has a separate job description and provides for quality of care by orienting new staff, developing unit policies, and providing direct support where needed, such as assisting in emergency situations (Chase, 1995, p. 156).

Here is an acceptable paraphrase of that same passage:

In her study of the roles of nurses in a critical care unit, Chase (1995) also found a hierarchy that distinguished the roles of experts and others. Just as the educational experts described above do not directly teach students, the experts in this unit do not directly attend to patients. That is the role of the staff nurses, who, like teachers, have their own “hierarchy of seniority” (p. 156). The roles of the experts include employing unit nurses and overseeing the care of special patients (nurse manager), teaching and otherwise integrating new personnel into the unit (clinical nurse specialist and nurse clinician), and policy-making (nurse clinician). In an intermediate position in the hierarchy is the resource nurse, a staff nurse with more experience than the others, who assumes direct care of patients as the other staff nurses do, but also takes on tasks to ensure the smooth operation of the entire facility.

Why is it acceptable? First, the student directly references the author and the source. The student also uses quotation marks around language taken word-for-word from the source (and does so sparingly). Second, the student modifies the language while conveying accurately the main ideas from the passage. Finally, the student’s sentence structure is completely different, showing that s/he has learned the information and can explain it to someone else.
Here is an unacceptable attempt at a paraphrase:

Critical care nurses have a hierarchy of roles. The nurse manager hires and fires nurses. S/he does not directly care for patients. On each shift a resource nurse attends to the functioning of the unit as a whole, such as making sure beds are available in the operating room, and also has a patient assignment. The nurse clinician orients new staff, develops policies, and provides support. The clinical nurse specialist also orients new staff, mostly by formal teaching. The nurse manager, nurse clinician, and clinical nurse specialist, as the designated experts, do not take patient assignments. The resource nurse is not only a caregiver but a resource to the other caregivers. Within the staff nurses there is also a hierarchy of seniority. Their job is to give assigned patients all their nursing care.

Why is this unacceptable? First, the student copies word-for-word phrases from the original without referencing the source. Second, the student uses the same sentence structure as Chase, beginning and ending sentences in the same ways. Notice that the student uses acceptable shared language in the form of conventional designations (clinical nurse specialist, nurse clinician, etc.) and technical terms (nursing care, etc.). Overall, however, this is an instance of plagiarism.

A Final Tip

A good rule is that if you CAN put something into your own words, you SHOULD! Scientific concepts, like the ones you are learning in this course, are ideas that you can learn and paraphrase. When you can explain a concept using your own words, you know the concept. Believe it or not, paraphrasing actually helps you study and master the knowledge necessary to pass your classes. We hope you visit the Writing Center with your Lab Book this semester so we can fight P-Word related crime together! 😊

By the way, here is how you would cite this source using APA style: Chase, S. K. (1995). The social context of critical care clinical judgment. Heart and Lung, 24, 154-162.