

LECTURE 8: The Mechanics of Effective Paraphrasing & Summarizing

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1. Paraphrasing vs. Direct Quoting

A high-quality academic essay balances the author's original voice with evidence from outside sources. While direct quotes are useful for highlighting precise definitions or powerful statements, relying on them too much can disrupt the flow of your writing. Paraphrasing—rewriting an author's ideas entirely in your own words while keeping the original meaning—is the preferred way to integrate evidence. It shows that you fully understand the material and helps you maintain control over the rhythm and direction of your essay.

2. The Four-Step Paraphrasing Process

To write an accurate and original paraphrase, follow this reliable four-step process: First, read the target passage multiple times until you fully understand its meaning. Second, cover or look away from the text and write out the core concept from memory. Third, compare your draft against the original passage to make sure you have altered the sentence structure and vocabulary without changing the facts. Fourth, integrate the appropriate citation smoothly into your sentence.

3. Effective Summarization Techniques

While paraphrasing focuses on rewriting short, specific sections of text, summarizing involves condensing larger bodies of work—like a whole section, chapter, or article—into a brief overview. A successful summary strips away minor details and examples, focusing only on the primary argument and key findings. It must remain objective, accurate, and completely free of the student's personal commentary.

4. Practical Paraphrasing Workshop

The instructor will present a complex academic excerpt on second language vocabulary retention. Students will practice rewriting the passage by changing grammatical structures (e.g., converting active voice to passive voice) and using accurate academic synonyms.

5. Tutorial Assignment

Select three paragraphs from an academic text. Write a formal paraphrase for each, and then create a single, condensed summary of all three paragraphs combined. Ensure all submissions include accurate source citations.