

PARAPHRASE

Putting someone else's ideas in your own words is paraphrasing. Usually, a paraphrase is about the same length as the original. Careless paraphrasing can lead to plagiarism. When you paraphrase, paraphrase completely. This means:

- Don't use the original sentence structure.
- Don't simply substitute a few words here and there.
- Avoid using any of the author's key words or unusual words.

Disciplines vary in the amount of the original language that you are permitted to use without quotation; check with your professor. In any case, if it is difficult or impossible to paraphrase certain language, then quote it exactly, and use quotation marks.

A good paraphrase takes work. An effective method is to read the original sentence, think about its meaning, look away from the original, write the idea in your own words, and then check your version against the original to be sure that you have not accidentally used too much of the original language.

Original Version	Unacceptable Paraphrase (Plagiarized sections are in bold type.)
<p>The craft of hurricane forecasting advanced rapidly <u>in the sixties and early seventies, thanks to fast computers and new atmospheric modeling techniques</u>. Now <u>there is a lull in the progress</u>, strangely parallel to the lull in the storm cycle. The National Hurricane Warning Center shoots for a <u>24-hour warning period</u>, with 12 daylight hours for evacuation. At that remove, it <u>can usually predict landfall within 100 miles either way</u>. Longer lead times mean <u>much larger landfall error</u>, and that is counterproductive. He who misses his predictions cries wolf.</p> <p>(From "Our Barrier Islands," by William H. MacLeish, Smithsonian, Sept. 1980, p. 54.)</p>	<p>Hurricane forecasting made rapid progress in the 60s and 70s due to fast computers and new atmospheric techniques, but there is now a lull in the progress. The Warning Center tries for a 24-hour warning period, including 12 hours of daylight. That close to the storm's arrival, the Warning Center can usually predict landfall within 100 miles either way. If lead times are longer, there will be a much larger error, which will be counter-productive (MacLeish 54).</p>

Explanation:

Many phrases are stolen from the original. Leaving out or changing a word here and there (for example, **much larger landfall error** has become **much larger error**) is not acceptable. Also, the plagiarized version duplicates the sentence structure of the original, which is not permitted. Even though the author (MacLeish) is supplied, the paraphrase is unacceptable.

Taken from: Avoiding Plagiarism at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia website:
<http://www.usip.edu/writing/plagrsn.shtml> (last visited 1/19/07)

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Original Version	Acceptable Paraphrase
<p>The craft of hurricane forecasting advanced rapidly <i>in the sixties and early seventies, thanks to fast computers and new atmospheric modeling techniques</i>. Now <i>there is a lull in the progress</i>, strangely parallel to the lull in the storm cycle. The National Hurricane Warning Center shoots for a <i>24-hour warning period</i>, with 12 daylight hours for evacuation. At that remove, it <i>can usually predict landfall within 100 miles either way</i>. Longer lead times mean <i>much larger landfall error</i>, and that is counterproductive. He who misses his predictions cries wolf.</p> <p>(From "Our Barrier Islands," by William H. MacLeish, Smithsonian, Sept. 1980, p. 54.)</p>	<p>During the past thirty years, powerful computers and new techniques which allow modeling of the atmosphere have significantly increased the accuracy of hurricane forecasting, though there have been no improvements in forecasting during the past few years. However, now it is possible to predict where a hurricane will hit land with an error of not more than 100 miles if a warning of 24 hours is allowed. If more than 24 hours is required, the error will be greater. Repeated forecasting errors will cause the public to ignore the warnings (MacLeish 54).</p>

Explanation:

This version uses different language and sentence structure from that of the original. Note: Even when your paraphrase is acceptable, you must show the source of the ideas. Putting ideas into your own words does not make those ideas your own. They are still the property of their originator, who must be given credit. The reference to MacLeish provides that credit.

SUMMARY

A summary briefly conveys in your own words the main idea of a passage. Like paraphrasing, careless summarizing can lead to plagiarism. The same rules apply as in paraphrasing: use your own language and sentence structure, and give credit to the originator of the ideas. Here are examples of acceptable and unacceptable summaries of the MacLeish passage given above:

Unacceptable Summary

(Plagiarized passages are in bold type.)

Hurricane warnings can be provided within a **24-hour warning period, with 12 hours of daylight for evacuation**, and can identify **landfall within 100 miles** (MacLeish 54).

Acceptable Summary

Using computers and new techniques which allow modeling of the atmosphere, forecasters can now provide a 24-hour hurricane warning and predict where a storm will hit with an error of not more than 100 miles (MacLeish 54).