How to Paraphrase

What is a Paraphrase?
A paraphrase is a summary of someone else’s idea(s) and words. You read another person’s writing and then summarize its main ideas and key points in your own words. **If you copy too many of the original author’s words and/or substitute synonyms instead of completely rewriting the text, then you are technically plagiarizing!**

Why Paraphrase?
- To use someone else’s ideas to support, illustrate, or develop your ideas
- To include important factual or supporting information
- To set up your discussion of another person’s writing and/or ideas
- To use someone’s ideas but not their words because you can say it better in your own words

How NOT to Write a Paraphrase
- Copy most of the original writing, but change a word or two.
- Copy the original writing, but use synonyms to avoid using all of the same words.

Original Passage Integrated as a Quote: Stephen North says in “The Idea of a Writing Center” that the Writing Center’s “job is to produce better writers, not better writing” (78).

Bad Paraphrase: Stephen North says the Writing Center’s job is to produce better writers (78).

Bad Paraphrase: Stephen North says that the Writing Center’s vocation is to make improved writers, not improved writing (78).

How to Write a Paraphrase
- Read the original passage; write notes in the margin and highlight key ideas.
- Turn the original passage facedown, or close the book.
- Write your summary of the passage from memory; don’t peek!
- Look at the original passage again; make sure you didn’t remember it too well!

Good Paraphrase: In his classic article “The Idea of a Writing Center,” Stephen North argues that Writing Centers should focus less on writing and more on the writers seeking assistance (78).

How to Cite a Paraphrase
- Introduce the paraphrase.
  - Explain who originally said the ideas and where he or she said them.
- In MLA format:
  - At the end of the paraphrase, include the page number(s) of the passage that you paraphrased. The page numbers should be in parentheses, and the period should be after the parentheses.
  - If you are paraphrasing an internet source, there may not be a page number to include.

For example:

Jeff Brooks claims in his often-cited essay “Minimalist Tutoring” that students should be the main force behind improving their writing (18).