Paraphrasing

Learning the Skill

Using your own words to restate information is **paraphrasing**. Paraphrasing can help you get the most out of your reading and writing.

When you paraphrase, you need to:

- Put the ideas in your own words.
- Vary your sentence structure from that used in the original.
- Credit the author for his or her ideas.
- Give more details than a summary, which focuses on just a main idea.

You should paraphrase when . . .

- You are confused by a passage. Stop and reread, and then try restating the basic points in your own words. Think about what you would say if you were explaining the idea to someone else. This mental process can help you better understand the original passage.
- You take notes from a source you are researching. Unless you want to quote an author’s exact words, restate your notes in your own words. This will help you better understand the main points, and you avoid plagiarism—presenting someone else’s ideas as your own.
- You do not want to include too many direct quotations in your paper or essay. Use wording like “According to J.J. Smith . . .” to make it clear that you are paraphrasing someone else’s ideas. But then rewrite the idea in your own words.

✔ Practicing the Skill

**Directions:** Read the following passages. Then answer the questions that follow.

**Original**

“AIDS has had a destructive social and economic impact. Medical bills drain the resources of individuals and governments. The loss of trained workers, foreign investment, and tourist dollars due to AIDS weakens economies. Finally, the death of parents causes enormous hardships for countless families. The United Nations predicts that the number of African children made orphans by AIDS could reach 20 million by 2010.”
Paraphrase

1. According to the passage, the region has been devastated—both socially and economically—by AIDS. 2. The disease has impacted the area in three major ways: 3. First, huge medical bills have wiped out the budgets of citizens and their governments. 4. Second, economies have been weakened. 5. This stems from the decrease in the skilled labor force as well as losses in tourism and foreign investment. 6. Finally, the death of parents causes enormous hardships for countless families. 7. The United Nations forecasts that African children orphaned by AIDS could number 20 million by the year 2010.

1. Sentence 1 is important to the paraphrase because
   A. it details how AIDS affects African families.
   B. it gives credit to the original source.
   C. it lists three ways that AIDS has affected Africa.
   D. it uses the same sentence structure as the original.

2. What is wrong with sentence 6?
   A. It uses a different sentence structure than the original.
   B. It does not convey the same idea as the original.
   C. It contains errors in spelling and grammar.
   D. It plagiarizes the original by copying it word for word.

3. In one sentence, the student paraphrases the idea but copies the same sentence structure. Find this sentence, and then rewrite it so that both the words and sentence structure vary from the original.

✅ Applying the Skill

Directions: Read the text below. Then paraphrase it on a separate sheet of paper.

A variety of religions are practiced in Africa south of the Sahara. These include hundreds of traditional African religions. Although Africa's traditional religions differ, most include a belief in a supreme being and lesser spirits who influence everyday life. These lesser spirits can be linked to particular places, such as a river or spring. They can also be linked to specific human activities, such as farming or fishing.