Differences between Summarizing and Paraphrasing

The terms paraphrasing and summarizing often confuse students of English. Paraphrasing and summarizing are both indispensable writing tools. They are both techniques of incorporating other writers' works or ideas into your writing using your own words. Although a writer must always use his/her own ideas when writing, sometimes it becomes necessary to use other writers' thoughts and concepts.

In this handout you will find a comparison between summarizing and paraphrasing. In addition to that you will find suggestions that would help you decide when to summarize and when to paraphrase.

Paraphrasing	Summarizing
● Paraphrasing is re-writing another writer's words or ideas in your own words without altering the meaning.	● Summarizing, on the other hand, is putting down the main ideas of someone else's work in your own words.
● The paraphrase is about the same length as the original since the purpose is to rephrase without leaving out anything, and not to shorten.	● A summary is always shorter than the original since the idea is to include only the main points of the original work and to leave out the irrelevant. A summary is usually about one-third the size of the original.

Paraphrase when:

• You want to use another writer's words without plagiarizing

• You want to use another writer's words without the use of quotes

• The ideas of the other writer are more important than his/her style

• You think that the words of the other writer are too difficult for your readers

Handout 3.13

Summarize when:

• You want to identify only the main ideas of the writer

• You want to give an overview of the topic (from several sources)

• You want to simplify a complex argument

• You want to condense the matter to suit your requirement

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