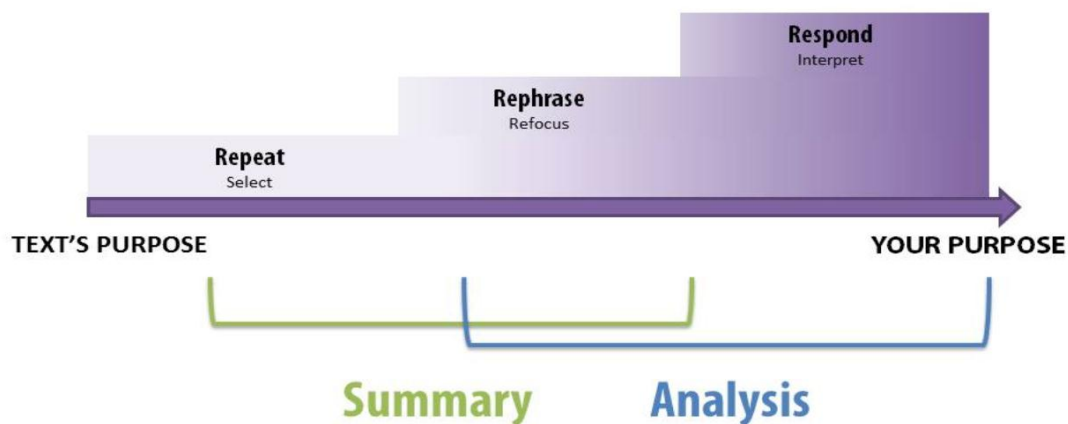


USING SOURCE MATERIAL FOR YOUR PURPOSES

Incorporating the ideas of other authors into your writing is a valuable way to strengthen your own argument. Using the ideas of other authors and researchers in your field as “evidence” situates your work within current scholarship in your field and helps to build the credibility of your claims. Here, we provide three techniques to paraphrase source material to effectively (and responsibly) fit your own rhetorical purposes: Repeat, Rephrase, and Respond.

The Paraphrasing Spectrum¹



To **Repeat**, you **select the main claims or most relevant parts** of a text. Instructors often assign this task so you can demonstrate comprehension of the course readings. To repeat, you can either use and interpret a direct quotation, or summarize the argument in your own words, closely sticking to the source text's argument. One effective option when repeating is to select and quote a few choice words from the author's idea into your own sentence.

As you move to **Rephrase**, you begin to **refocus** a text's argument. This often involves explaining the source text in your own words, but you might also start to focus the reader's attention to certain ideas that you think are more relevant than others. As you rephrase, you might also include some evaluation or interpretation of the source text.

Finally, you can **Respond** to the text, using the source text for a new purpose to make your own point. When you respond to an author's ideas to suit your own rhetorical needs, you can **transform their knowledge**² into tailored evidence that can inform, support or illuminate your own argument.

¹ (Shanmugaraj et al. 2020) <http://compositionforum.com/issue/43/paraphrasing.php>

² (Breireter and Scardamalia 1987)

Paraphrasing and Plagiarism?

Many people find paraphrasing difficult because they are worried about too closely mimicking the language of the author in a way that could be considered plagiarism. However, plagiarism becomes less of a problem if you effectively *change the focus* of that author’s ideas to reflect *your* purpose as an author; the new focus is then how an idea relates to *your* topic.

If you are worried about plagiarism, a good rule of thumb is this: would the original author recognize the *language* as their own? If the answer is yes, then you probably need to further transform the source text.

Paraphrasing Examples – of Repeat, Rephrase, and Respond

Source Text ³	Repeat	Explanation
“27% of Americans have suffered abusive conduct at work; another 21% have witnessed it; 72% are aware that workplace bullying happens.”	According to a study from the Workplace Bullying Institute, an organization dedicated to studying and preventing abusive conduct at work, “27% of Americans have suffered abusive conduct at work; another 21% have witnessed it; 72% are aware that workplace bullying happens (2011). It seems like the majority of Americans are aware of the occurrence of workplace bullying, but less have experienced firsthand.	The writer introduces us to the context of this information, uses a direct quote, then interprets what the quotation is saying so that we understand why it is relevant.

Source Text	Rephrase	Explanation
“27% of Americans have suffered abusive conduct at work; another 21% have witnessed it; 72% are aware that workplace bullying happens.”	According to the Workplace Bullying Institute, a staggering three-fourths of Americans realize that workplace bullying occurs, with more than one in four describing themselves as direct victims of workplace abuse.	In this example, the writer has rephrased the text to amplify the source text’s original argument. 72% becomes “three-fourths,” which is a good approximation but emphasizes the magnitude of the number. Words like “staggering” and “more than” also highlight how bad this problem is.

³ Cited in (Shanmugaraj et al. 2020) <http://compositionforum.com/issue/43/paraphrasing.php>

Source Text	Respond 1	Explanation
<p>“27% of Americans have suffered abusive conduct at work; another 21% have witnessed it; 72% are aware that workplace bullying happens.”</p>	<p>Although the Workplace Bullying Institute states that 27% of American employees have suffered from workplace abuse, they do not report how many individuals declined to complete their survey. Since those who have suffered from bullying are likely more motivated to complete a survey than those who have not, this survey likely over-represents the workplace bullying problem.</p>	<p>Here the writer responds to the text by inferring information not explicitly stated in the text. They uses the 27% to cast doubt on the survey’s findings since she inferred the methodology was flawed. This claim, based on their own independent reasoning, transforms the statistic into evidence supporting the writer’s purpose, not the source text’s.</p>

There are many ways to respond to a text since different writers have different purposes. In other words, you can take the same source text and use it to make two completely different arguments. For example:

Source Text	Respond 2	Explanation
<p>“27% of Americans have suffered abusive conduct at work; another 21% have witnessed it; 72% are aware that workplace bullying happens.”</p>	<p>Separate studies by the Workplace Bullying Institute (2014) and Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy and Alberts (2007) each found that over one quarter of U.S. employees have been victims of bullying behavior. Together these two studies provide compelling evidence that bullying is an ongoing problem in the U.S. workplace.</p>	<p>This writer “transforms” the source text by strengthening it; she combines data from two studies to show evidence of a trend. She uses words like “each found,” “together,” and “compelling evidence” to emphasize a relationship.</p>