

Patchwriting versus Paraphrasing

What is Patchwriting?

Patchwriting is **the process where a writer attempts to paraphrase a source, but still uses some or all of the key words from a given passage**. Writers who patchwrite may take a quote from a source and only change small things about that quote. Sometimes they use **similar words or synonyms**, and sometimes they **change some of the grammar of the quote** to suit their needs. For a thorough discussion of the concept, [The Citation Project](#) links to [this entry](#) in Merriam-Webster's "Words We're Watching" column.

Why is Patchwriting Frowned Upon?

Whether writers do patchwriting intentionally or not, **patchwriting is a "misuse of sources"** ("What Is (And Isn't) Plagiarism"), since it borrows words and phrases from a source, perhaps without attribution or citation, or perhaps without creating enough originality in the paraphrase. Any time a source's ideas, words, or thoughts are used, writers should give them credit. Likewise, any time you paraphrase, you should attempt to create an original rendering of the idea being expressed. Patchwriting is also an indication of the writer's understanding of the material that is being quoted. Often patchwriters are not familiar enough with the concepts from the source in a way that helps them effectively paraphrase in their own words. Most importantly, patchwriting **gives up the writer's own voice** for that of the source!

What Does Patchwriting Look Like?

Consider the following quote:

Python-Bot was developed with the SnatchBot API, using it's predefined tools that is driven by various NLP algorithms. SnatchBot is a website for Chatbot creation. It helps you to handle end-to-end bot management from creating and reviewing flows to publishing and reporting performance (Okonkwo and Ade-Ibijola 4).

A patch-written example of this quote may look like this:

Developed with the SnatchBot API, Python Bot is comprised of tools from SnatchBot and operates by using various NLP algorithms. Snatch bot was used by the authors because

it helped them handle end-to-end management from the creation and review of publishing and reporting performance (Okonkwo and Ade-Ibijola 4).

Let's examine this a bit closer to see what was borrowed:

Developed with the SnatchBot API, Python Bot is comprised of tools from Snatchbot and operates by using various NLP algorithms. Snatch bot was used by the authors because it helped them handle end-to-end management from the creation and review of publishing and reporting performance (Okonkwo and Ade-Ibijola 4).

The underlined and highlighted portions above **came almost directly from the source material**. Some sentence structure and grammar were changed, but ultimately it uses key information and direct words from the source without quoting that material. While the writer of this example did use a citation, they borrowed sometime direct words and phrases without quoting them.

Okay, but what's the alternative?

Paraphrasing, or **putting ideas and concepts into one's own words to help readers understand clearly**, is used by writers instead of patchwriting.

Here is a revised paraphrase of the quote above:

SnatchBot proved a useful tool to create a Chatbot in Python, not only because of the way it is programmed to process NLP algorithms, but also because it helps developers oversee the full life cycle of the bot (Okonkwo and Ade-Ibijola 4).

So how do you paraphrase effectively?

Paraphrasing **asks writers to place sometimes difficult information and topics into their own words**. Not only is this translation work often challenging, it is also directly related to a writer's understanding of what their source is saying. Here are a few steps to help begin paraphrasing:

1. Find out what main ideas of the quote you intend to paraphrase are.
2. Isolate key topics in that quote that are needed to suit the goal of your paragraph, paper, or sentence.
3. Write a sentence or two about using what was found in steps 1 and 2.
4. Double check the paraphrased material is different from the quote.

Let's work through these together with a new source and quote.

Here's the quote:

Nurses and other healthcare professionals should be educated about use of appropriate terms and communication strategies for interacting with transgender patients. This includes using correct pronouns and proper identification as indicated by the patient. Nurses must respect their patients' privacy and advocate for their right to be cared for in a nondiscriminatory, harassment-free environment. (Barredo 240)

Step 1: Find the main idea of the quote

The authors are trying to outline what nurses can and should do to make transgender patients more comfortable when accessing care while also ensuring that they are not discriminated against or harassed by nurses or other healthcare professionals.

Step 2: Isolate topics in the quote to suit the goal of your writing:

I am writing a paper on the perception on transgender and other LGBTQIA individuals by those people in healthcare positions. The paragraph I am writing is towards the end of the paper where I want to highlight how nurses and other healthcare workers can be trained. Because of this goal, I want to focus on the key takeaways about what nurses can do to create a better environment for LGBTQIA individuals.

Step 3: Write a brief sentence or two combining steps 1 and 2:

In his article, Barredo outlines how best nurses and healthcare workers can be trained in order to help transgender patients to feel more comfortable in clinical settings. According to his article, Barredo wants to see nurses receive training on pronoun usage and trans-affirming vocabulary while also reviewing current HIPPA guidelines to ensure that these rights are respected for all individuals (Barredo 240).

Step 4: Double check that the paraphrased materials does not use similar structure or key vocabulary words.

Paraphrased:	Original Source:
In his article, Barredo outlines how best nurses and healthcare workers can be trained in order to help transgender patients feel more comfortable in clinical settings. According to his article, Barredo wants to see nurses receive training on pronoun usage and trans-affirming vocabulary while also reviewing current HIPPA guidelines to ensure that these rights are respected for all individuals. (Barredo 240)	Nurses and other healthcare professionals should be educated about use of appropriate terms and communication strategies for interacting with transgender patients. This includes using correct pronouns and proper identification as indicated by the patient. Nurses must respect their patients' privacy and advocate for their right to be cared for in a nondiscriminatory, harassment-free environment. (Barredo 240)

Let's Review:

Patchwriting is when writers **use similar words, phrases, and sentence structure from a source without quoting them.** While writers may include a citation, there is a lot of borrowed material from the source left in the text. Instead of patchwriting, writers should learn to **paraphrase.** Paraphrasing is **when writers take ideas and concepts from a source and put them in their own unique words.** To paraphrase effectively, it is **first important to understand what the source is saying/arguing for in relationship to what you are writing.**

You can begin to paraphrase effectively by following four main steps:

1. Find out what main ideas of the quote you intend to paraphrase are.
2. Isolate key topics in that quote that are needed to suit the goal of your paragraph, paper, or sentence.
3. Write a sentence or two about using what was found in steps 1 and 2.
4. *Double check that the paraphrased materials does not use similar structure or key vocabulary words.*

Works Cited

Barredo, Justin Omar. "Room Assignments, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression: A Case Study on Caring for Transgender Patients." *MedSurg Nursing*, vol. 29, no. 4, Jul/Aug 2020, pp. 237–244. *Academic Search Complete*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=145282315&site=ehost-live&scope=site. Accessed 12 Oct. 2021.

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"What Is (And Isn't) Plagiarism?" *The Citation Project: Reframing the Conversation about Plagiarism*. <http://www.citationproject.net/plagiarism/>. Accessed 28 Oct. 2021.