

Proper Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a way to take information found when researching and putting it into your own words. It is not a hard skill to master, but a very important one. It also makes your job easier since you will probably write less than if you copied the information from the original source.

Imagine that you are researching information for a paper on the history of Spider-Man and you found this information on a page titled, "The Men who Made Spider-Man." Below are some examples of bad paraphrasing and good paraphrasing. Then you will have a chance to practice on your own.

Example 1

...I certainly hope I don't sound like one of those skills for Stan Lee who thinks he walks on water, but I still firmly believe that he is the greatest writer in Spidey's history. Short of someone doing a Peter David-style run (David did the Incredible Hulk for more than 10 years straight - absolutely incredible - no pun intended) on Spider-Man, I don't think anyone will top him. First of all, there's his 100 issue consecutive string on Amazing Spider-Man – making him a charter member of what I call Spidey's "Century Club," those creators who have written or drawn 100 or more core Spider-Man title stories.

Stan Lee is the greatest writer in Spider-Man's history. He has his 100 issue consecutive string on Amazing Spider-Man that puts him in Spider-Man's Century Club.

This is bad paraphrasing. Why? Look at it again, this time I will bold face all words and phrases that came directly from the original source.

Stan Lee **is the greatest writer in** Spider-Man's **history**. He has **his 100 issue consecutive string on Amazing Spider-Man** that puts him in **Spider-Man's Century Club**.

All the student has done here is copy the source and insert his own words here and there. That is NOT paraphrasing. That is plagiarism. A better example would be this:

Stan Lee is one of the best Spider-Man writers in the comic's history mainly due to his 100 issue run on Amazing Spider-Man.

All the main information is there, but it is in the student's own words now (and notice that it is less writing than before).

USEFUL TIP – when taking notes, do not look at the source material and do not write your notes in complete sentences. Instead, just write down the important information in as few of words possible to still understand why you took the note in the first place. For example, in the above passage, the student may have only written this in his notes: Great Writer – Stan Lee – 100 straight issues on ASM

Example 2

*I have no doubt that **Steve Ditko** was the perfect creative partner for Stan when Spidey began back in 1962. His style (often is called "quirky" by those searching for one word to describe it), **gave Peter Parker and the world about him an ordinariness that set him apart** from the muscular and handsome Greek-god superheroes prevalent at the time. It's hard to believe that he only illustrated the first 38 issues of *Amazing Spider-Man* because it just seems like he did more. It is **Ditko who had a hand in designing and defining the look of several of Spidey's classic rogues' gallery**, as noted earlier, and who ensured that **the character and his adventures stayed firmly planted on terra firma**, with stories involving gangsters and costumed hooligans, rather than cosmic, sci-fi bad guys.*

In the above passage, the bold face words are the information that the student found important. Here is how he put it into his own words:

Steve Ditko's art made Spider-Man unique in comic books by not making him super muscular and handsome. He also created several of Spider-Man's villains, which despite being created back in 1962, are still being used today. It is due to his influence that Spider-Man faces down to earth adventures more than cosmic and mystical stories.

Basic information – not all the information in the passage, just the important parts.

USEFUL TIP – when taking notes, don't look at the original source material. This will help prevent accidental copying into your notes. Remember that there may be up to 2 weeks between writing that note card and putting the information into the paper. You are likely to forget that you copied the information straight from the source.

One last example. This time, see if you can underline what the student thought would be important before reading what the student chose to write.

Example 3

Next to Stan Lee – it's likely that Gerry Conway has had the most influence on Spider-Man and his world than any other writer. This is made even more amazing (pun intended) when we note that Conway was a friggin' teenager when he first took on the assignment. Under Conway, both Gwen Stacy and Norman Osborn met their deaths, which still resonates till this day... and the relationship between Peter and Mary Jane flourished from friendship to romance.

Gerry Conway, despite being a teenager when he started, is probably the second most influential writer on the Spider-Man comic books. He is the one who wrote the influential deaths of Gwen Stacy and Norman Osborn and is responsible for the romance between Peter and Mary Jane.

Article excerpts (used with permission and may be slightly condensed) from:

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