PARAPHRASING EXAMPLES

Plagiarism results from inappropriate use of sources of information. Consider how the information from a text has been used in the examples that follow.

Original text

Critical care nurses function in a hierarchy of roles. In this open heart surgery unit, the nurse manager hires and fires the nursing personnel. The nurse manager does not directly care for patients but follows the progress of unusual or long-term patients. On each shift a nurse assumes the role of resource nurse. This person oversees the hour-by-hour functioning of the unit as a whole, such as considering expected admissions and discharges of patients, ascertaining that beds are available for patients in the operating room, and covering sick calls. Resource nurses also take a patient assignment. They are the most experienced of all the staff nurses. The nurse clinician has a separate job description and provides for quality of care by orienting new staff, developing unit policies, and providing direct support where needed, such as assisting in emergency situations. The clinical nurse specialist in this unit is mostly involved with formal teaching in orienting new staff. The nurse manager, nurse clinician, and clinical nurse specialist are the designated experts. They do not take patient assignments. The resource nurse is seen as both a caregiver and a resource to other caregivers. . . . Staff nurses have a hierarchy of seniority. . . . Staff nurses are assigned to patients to provide all their nursing care.


An inappropriate paraphrase: Example 1

Critical care nurses follow a hierarchy of roles. The nurse manager hires and fires nurses, does not directly care for patients but follows unusual or long-term cases. Routinely a resource nurse attends to the functioning of the unit as a whole; such as ensuring beds are available in the operating room, while also having a patient assignment. The nurse clinician orients new staff, develops policies, and provides support where needed. The clinical nurse specialist also orients new staff, mostly by formal teaching. Since the nurse manager, nurse clinician, and clinical nurse specialist are the designated experts, they are not given patient assignments. The resource nurse is a caregiver and resource to other caregivers. Staff nurses are senior in rank therefore they provide all the nursing care to patients.

Note: the bold text shows the phrases that are copied word for word from the source.

Why is this paraphrase inappropriate? This is an example of a paraphrase that is plagiarised from the original text. It is plagiarism because it:

- Does not acknowledge the source (i.e. no citation supplied);
- Retains the author’s style of expression and sentence structure;
Most of the phrases are directly copied without the use of quotation marks; and

Does not show the writer’s understanding of the essential message.

Let us now consider another example.

**An inappropriate paraphrase: Example 2**

Chase (1995) describes how nurses in a critical care unit function in a hierarchy that places designated experts at the top and the least senior staff nurses at the bottom. The experts — the nurse manager, nurse clinician, and clinical nurse specialist — are not involved directly in patient care. The staff nurses, in contrast, are assigned to patients and provide all their nursing care. Within the staff nurses is a hierarchy of seniority in which the most senior can become resource nurses: they are assigned a patient but also serve as a resource to other caregivers. The experts have administrative and teaching tasks such as selecting and orienting new staff, developing unit policies, and giving hands-on support where needed.

**Why is this paraphrase inappropriate?** This is called a patchwork paraphrase. It refers to a piece of writing that is composed by combining chunks from the original, with pieces written in the writer’s own words.

It is an inappropriate paraphrase because:

- Although, the content is rearranged into a new pattern, none of the borrowed phrases are enclosed within quotation marks;

- Although the writer has acknowledged the source, the reproduced phrases are falsely presented as the student’s own; and

- It does not show understanding of the essential message.

For these reasons, this example is also a plagiarised version of the original.

**Version 3: An appropriate paraphrase**

In her study of the roles of nurses in a critical care unit, Chase (1995) also found a hierarchy that distinguished the roles of experts and others. Just as the educational experts described above do not directly teach students, the experts in this unit do not directly attend to patients. That is the role of the staff nurses, who, like teachers, have their own “hierarchy of seniority” (p. 156). The roles of the experts include employing unit nurses and overseeing the care of special patients (nurse manager), teaching and otherwise integrating new personnel into the unit (clinical nurse specialist and nurse clinician), and policy-making (nurse clinician). In an intermediate position in the hierarchy is the resource nurse, a staff nurse with more experience than the others, who assumes direct care of patients as the other staff nurses do, but also takes on tasks to ensure the smooth operation of the entire facility.
Why is this paraphrase appropriate? This example demonstrates a legitimate or genuine paraphrase. It is appropriate because it satisfies all the requirements of effective paraphrasing and proper acknowledgement. In other words, the writer has:

- Understood the message of the passage;
- Acknowledged the borrowed idea by citing it correctly;
- Incorporated the borrowed phrase as a direct quotation and has appropriately integrated the quotation into her writing;
- Constructed a new passage but retained the essential meaning; this has been achieved by modifying vocabulary and sentence structure substantially so that it is different from the original;
- Supplied sufficient information for the reader to understand the context within which the ideas appeared in the original text;
- Showed understanding by linking the information to the writer’s context and purpose (i.e., to show the key functions of experts and non-experts in several professions); and
- Used the information meaningfully by making a link to a previous aspect of the discussion and clearly demonstrating the relevance of the idea (i.e., appropriate integration and synthesis).

You should aim to fulfil all of these criteria when paraphrasing and quoting from sources.

Recap

- Effective writing practices when paraphrasing and quoting will minimise the risk of plagiarism.
- Adopt various strategies to avoid plagiarism when using sources.