Paraphrasing and Summarizing Overview

When you take notes from your research sources, you may **summarize** or **paraphrase**. A **summary** gives a brief restatement of only the most important points of a source. A **paraphrase**, on the other hand, restates a source's ideas completely and is, therefore, about the same length as the original. When you restate ideas, you must use your own words and sentence structure.

In addition to being helpful in taking notes, paraphrasing and summarizing skills will come in handy when it is time for you to present relevant perspectives, or opinions and ideas, of other writers on your topic. If you want to provide your readers with a detailed report on a particular perspective, you can paraphrase the writer's ideas. Otherwise, you will want to summarize the ideas of other writers.

Read the following passage carefully. Then, take a look at the summary and the paraphrase that follow the passage.

Helping Hearts is not just any business. This is a candle-making business with a big heart and a big purpose: helping Romanian orphans. Valorie Darling and Arielle Ring of Spokane, Washington, started the business when they were both eleven years old. The two girls started selling handmade beeswax candles that they first made as Christmas presents. During its first year, Helping Hearts donated about $8,000 to charities in Romania.

Summary: Eleven-year-olds Valorie Darling and Arielle Ring use their candle-making business, Helping Hearts, to benefit Romanian orphans.

Paraphrase: Two eleven-year-olds are using their candle-making business to help Romanian orphanages. Valorie Darling and Arielle Ring of Spokane, Washington, were making beeswax candles for holiday gifts when they decided to start selling their home-made candles. They named their business Helping Hearts, and donated about $8,000 to Romanian charities in the first year.

Summarizing

When you **summarize**, you mention and explain only the most important ideas of a work. Because a summary is much shorter than the original text, you have to decide which ideas to include and which ones to leave out. To summarize an informational text, start by naming the title, the author, and the subject. Then, go on to state the main ideas and the **key details**, those that support the main idea or underlying meaning. Follow the same order that the writer used. If you quote any of the writer's words, be sure to put quotation marks around them.

If you are summarizing a short story, you cite the story's title and author and the **main events** of the plot. You should mention the story's main characters, the conflict, and, of course, the resolution of the conflict.