Paraphrase & Scientific Writing

What is paraphrase?
- Summary of source material in your own words. In scientific writing, this can take many forms:
  - a single piece of information (e.g., a result) condensed into a single (or portion of a single) sentence of paraphrase
  - an entire study methodology condensed into one or two sentences of paraphrase
  - the purpose, approach, results, and interpretation of a single study condensed into one or more sentences of paraphrase
- Introduced with signal phrases (when appropriate; see below) and responsibly cited

Why is it valued over direct quotation?
- Paraphrase demonstrates comprehension of source material
- Paraphrase can be more concisely and cohesively integrated with surrounding explanation and analysis than direct quotation, which calls attention to itself and thus slows readers down
- Direct quotation should be rare and special: reserve use for cases in which the original wording is distinct (e.g., in the case of an organizational mission statement), notable (e.g., when the exact wording is analyzed or discussed) or exceptional (e.g., in the case of a speech, which you are unlikely to use in scientific writing)

How is it used in Scientific Writing?
- Paraphrase of source texts never exists in isolation -- it is synthesized with other paraphrase to make a cohesive point.
  - To describe a problem or gap in knowledge/research
  - To provide other context and/or synopses of previous research
  - To define key terms and concepts
  - To justify a study aim, methodology or interpretation of findings
  - To demonstrate consensus or distinction of conclusions
- Paraphrase is always followed by original analysis -- commentary that explains, interprets, and/or discusses the source material in the context of other ideas for specific purposes.
How do you write it?

- Read the source text thoroughly and carefully: you need to understand it well enough to accurately discuss it with a colleague without consulting the source text.
- Set the source text aside and summarize the portions relevant to your purpose in your own words.
- Return to the source text and compare your summary/paraphrase to it for accuracy.
  - You CAN ethically use the shared jargon -- specialized terminology and language unique to a discipline -- in your paraphrase.
  - You CANNOT use the same phrasing or sentence structure: if the wording of your paraphrase too closely matches that of the source text, set the original aside, give yourself some time/distance from it, and try again.
- When necessary for clarity and cohesion, use signal phrases to introduce your paraphrase. For example
  - According to Beets et al.1...
  - In a randomized controlled trial of physical activity changes in U.S. after school care programs, Beets et al.1 found...
  - Beets et al.1 used the Strategies to Enhance Practice framework to...