

Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing

These three ways of incorporating other writers' work into your own writing differ according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing.

A **quote** is the **exact** wording of the source material (either written or spoken). Quotes match the original source word for word.

A **paraphrase** is a **detailed** restatement in your own words of a source material. Apart from the changes in organization, wording, and sentence structure, the paraphrase should be nearly identical in meaning to the original passage. It should also be near the same length as the original passage and present the details of the original.

A **summary** is a **condensed** version of a passage. Similar to paraphrasing, summarizing involves using your own words and writing style to express another author's ideas. Unlike the paraphrase, which presents important details, the summary presents only the most essential ideas of the original text.

Revising

Quotations should be used in occasional cases when the wording of a source is just as important as the meaning. You might use quotations for the following reasons:

Accuracy: You are unable to paraphrase or summarize the source material without changing the author's intent.

Authority: You may want to use a quote to lend expert authority for your assertion or to provide source material for analysis.

Conciseness: Your attempts to paraphrase or summarize are awkward or much longer than the source material.

Unforgettable language: You believe that the words of the author are memorable or remarkable because of their effectiveness or historical flavor. Additionally, the author may have used a unique phrase or sentence, and you want to comment on words or phrases themselves.

When you decide to quote, be conscious of relying too much upon one source or quoting too much of a source and make sure that your use of the quote demonstrates an understanding of the source material. Essentially, you want to avoid having a paper that is a string of quotes with occasional input from you.

When should I paraphrase?

You want to paraphrase or summarize when the wording of the source is less important than the meaning of the source. Paraphrasing and summarizing allow you to maintain continuity of style in your paper and show your mastery of source material. Paraphrasing may be preferable to summarizing because paraphrases are more detailed and specific. You might use paraphrasing for the following reasons:

To change the organization of ideas for emphasis. You may have to change the organization of ideas in source material so that you can emphasize the points that are most related to your paper. You should remember to be faithful to the meaning of the source.

To simplify the material. You may have to simplify complex arguments, sentences, or vocabulary.

To clarify the material. You may have to clarify technical passages or specialized information into language that is appropriate for your audience.

When you decide to paraphrase, avoid keeping the same structure of ideas, sentence structure, or just changing some of the words. Be careful not to add your ideas into the paraphrase and to be faithful to the meaning of the source material.

When should I summarize?

Again, you will want to paraphrase or summarize when the wording of the source is less important than the meaning of the source. A summary may be preferable to paraphrasing because summaries are very flexible and can be used to provide a brief overview of a text. For example, you could summarize a book in a sentence, or in several paragraphs, depending on your writing situation and audience. You may use the summary often for the following reasons:

To condense the material. You may have to condense or to reduce the source material to draw out the points that relate to your paper.

To omit extras from the material. You may have to omit extra information from the source material to focus on the author's main points.

When you decide to summarize, avoid keeping the same structure of ideas and/or sentence structure. Also, avoid just changing some of the words. Be careful not to add your ideas into the summary and to be faithful to the meaning of the source material.

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