

The Art of Integrating Sources

As a writer in a rigorous, writing-based academic program, it is important for you to understand how to use references concisely in your papers. In an academic context, and in the context of writing for social justice within your profession, there are generally three ways you will use citation: summarizing, quoting, and paraphrasing. Becoming skilled at citation will be a useful and powerful tool in convincing people of your argument and supporting your ideas with evidence. The purpose of this page is to help you recognize which forms of citation will best suit your writing purposes. Keep in mind that as you continue to practice citation, you will eventually become very artful at weaving others' ideas into your paper to support your argument.

A Quick Word About Plagiarism

Practicing good citation habits regarding quotations and paraphrasing is especially important to avoiding plagiarism. Plagiarism is considered a serious offense in academic writing and can, in extreme cases, result in expulsion from a university. Plagiarism can range on a continuum from neglecting to cite ideas that were borrowed from a text to copying someone's writing and putting your name as the author.

What types of information do you not need to cite?

You do not need to cite information that is common knowledge within your discourse community. Hacker and Sommers (2010) define common knowledge as "information your readers may know or could easily be located in any number of reference sources" (p. 626). For example, a psychology student would not need to define and cite Freud's concepts of Id, Ego, Superego, or Transference, as these are very well understood ideas in the psychology community and easily accessed by the general public.

Definitions: What is the difference between a summary, quotation, and paraphrase?

When writing a research paper, it is important to know how to use references to support your point. In a research paper, you are the voice of authority, and your references are your panel of experts that chime in to support your statements and prove to your audience (reader) that what you are writing is researched and reliable. Summaries, quotations, and paraphrases can each be used in unique ways to support your argument.

Summaries

Summaries are useful in presenting key ideas from journal articles, books, essays, and studies into one or two condensed, easy-to-read paragraphs. Summaries are common in literature reviews when a writer has done an exhaustive amount of research and wants to briefly convey key ideas to her readers in order to support an argument. Use summaries when you need to condense a large amount of information down to its basic points.

Direct Quotations

“Quote when the passage is so effective – so clear; so concise, so authoritative, so memorable — that you would find it difficult to improve on” (Green & Lindinsky, 2008, p. 126)

When using a direct quote, always put quotation marks around the passage so that your readers will know whose words they are reading. You may splice quoted sentences, words, or phrases into your texts as long as you do not change the intended meaning of the quote (Hjorshoj, 2001, pp. 179-181).

Hacker & Sommers (2010) give the following recommendations for using quotations:

- When language is especially vivid or expressive.
- When exact wording is needed for technical accuracy.
- When it is best to let the debaters of an issue explain their positions in their own words.
- When the words of an authority lend weight to an argument.
- When the language of a source is the topic of your discussion (as in an analysis or interpretation) (pp. 629-630).

Direct Quoting vs. Paraphrasing

Direct quoting is when you insert an author’s exact words into your own writing. Normally, you would not want the quote to stand-alone: when quoting directly, provide a context for the quote. Introduce the author before you give the quote (“As AUTHOR X states...”) and explain how and why the quote is relevant. Paraphrasing, on the other hand, can be thought of as summarizing or putting another author’s words into your own. It differs from direct quoting in that you are not quoting the author verbatim, but rather rephrasing their ideas.

Many students will have an abundance of direct quotes in their essays because they believe paraphrasing to be too difficult, especially when the author is using complex language or vocabulary. However, depending on the discipline in which you are writing, you may have to use both methods in a balanced way, or even rely on one more than the other. For instance, the sciences rarely include direct quotes. Whichever method you are using, keep the following in mind:

- **Be strategic.** You should have a valid reason for choosing a direct quote over a paraphrase and vice versa. For instance, do not paraphrase a quote that is heavy on jargon or specific terminology; there might be no other way to rephrase these types of words in which case direct quoting is more appropriate. Additionally, if you find a long quote that you can summarize in a more concise way, paraphrasing may better suite you.
- **Give credit to the author.** Most students know that direct quotes always call for citation, but some students may think that paraphrasing does not. However, citing is required in any instance where you use the ideas or words of another author. Depending on the format you use, you may include an in-text citation or footnote. Additionally, you can begin your paraphrase or direct quote by mentioning the author’s name: “In his article, AUTHOR X argues...”

Use Relevant Quotes

Sometimes, students read too quickly and misinterpret the author or choose a quote that contradicts their main point. Remember that the essay represents YOUR original thoughts and ideas; all quoting should be viewed as supplemental. Only quote when necessary and make every quote count! Choose quotes that are going to give you credibility as an author; not detract from your writing and take over your essay.

Paraphrasing

The best time to paraphrase is when an author's idea is important, but the language used to describe the idea is not necessarily clear or could be presented in a better way for your reader (Green & Lidinsky, 2008). Unlike summarizing, paraphrasing is roughly the same length as the original text.

Steps for Paraphrasing

1. Read the selection you would like to paraphrase and be sure that you completely understand what the author is saying. Stop to take a moment of thoughtful intention. If you don't understand the passage, reconsider why you are using this text. Keep in mind that there is a greater chance of plagiarizing if you are unclear about an author's meaning.
2. Don't look at the source while paraphrasing. This will reduce your risk of copying language and sentence structure word for word (Hacker & Sommers, 2010).
3. Think about the author's meaning. Write down your interpretation or understanding of the subject. Ask yourself, "What does this passage really mean? What is most important about it for my argument? How can I best present it to my readers?" (Greene & Lidinsky, 2008, p. 126)
4. Check back with your original source to look for similar words or phrasing. While doing this, keep in mind that plagiarism is committed if "you half-copy the author's sentences-either by mixing the author's phrases with your own without using quotation marks or by plugging in your own synonyms into the author's sentence structure" (Hacker & Sommers, 2010, p. 628). If you find yourself doing these things, you may want to consider whether or not you are struggling to understand the author's intention. If this is not the case, look to see if it would be more appropriate to use a quote.
5. Lastly, make sure that your paraphrase conveys the author's intended meaning (Hacker & Sommers, 2010).

Avoiding Plagiarism while Paraphrasing:

Here's an exercise to clarify how a passage from a text must be properly paraphrased and referenced:

Original passage:

"Many anxiety symptoms and problems can be overcome. In fact, anxiety may be the most treatable of all mental health difficulties. Whether or not your experience of anxiety constitutes a mental health problem, decades of research have provided a wealth of valuable information."

Version A: Many anxiety symptoms and problems can be overcome. Anxiety may be the most treatable of all mental health difficulties. Whether your experience of anxiety constitutes a mental health difficulty, decades of research have provided a wealth of valuable information.

Analysis: Plagiarism – The student makes minor changes to the syntax but the wording and phrasing are nearly identical and there is no citation for the original text.

Version B: Many anxiety symptoms and problems can be overcome. In fact, anxiety may be the most treatable of all mental health difficulties. Whether or not your experience of anxiety constitutes a mental health problem, decades of research have provided a wealth of valuable information (Vye, Scholljegerdes, & Welsh, 2007).

Analysis: Plagiarism – Despite referencing the text, the student is using the same wording while attempting to paraphrase.

Version C: Vye, Scholljegerdes, and Welsh (2007) have indicated that while anxiety may be a common problem, it is more susceptible to treatment than similar issues. There is substantial research on anxiety at multiple levels, from disorder to inconvenience. (p. 9).

Analysis: Correctly Integrated – The student references the resource while also integrating a rephrased version of the important points.

Familiarize Yourself with Conventions

Finally, it is essential that you know how to format your citations. Remember that different disciplines utilize different formats and each format has a particular way of citing sources. If it is your first time writing in a particular format, consult a handbook or another credible source. Even if you have used a certain format before, always double-check your work. Part of being a budding scholar is being familiar with the conventions of your field, and proper citations indicate such.

References

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