

USING SOURCE MATERIAL: QUOTING, PARAPHRASING, AND SUMMARIZING

Why and how should I incorporate sources into my writing?

Integrating source material into your writing enriches your work in a number of ways: it can expand the depth or breadth of your argument, provide context, boost your credibility, and strengthen your claims. It can also allow you to introduce a work on which you plan to elaborate or with which you plan to agree or disagree (“Quoting,” 2013). Keep a few things in mind when inviting others’ ideas into your own writing:

- 1) Make sure that the source material doesn’t drown out your own voice.
- 2) It’s your job as the writer to interpret and comment on any source material you bring in.
- 3) Any source material you cite must be significant and relevant to your interpretation—and you must make this clear rather than relying on your reader’s ability to make those connections.
- 4) Never misrepresent source material (by distorting meaning) or misattribute it (by citing it incorrectly or by failing to cite it at all) (“Decide,” 2006).

What are the differences among quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing?

- **Quotations** employ the exact phrasing of a source text. According to Purdue’s Online Writing Lab (OWL), a quotation “must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author” (“Quoting,” 2013). Quotation marks must be used to offset the quoted material. Quotations are generally introduced with a signal phrase, which indicates to readers where the material comes from and its relationship to your analysis.
- **Paraphrases** put the ideas from a passage of a text into your own words. While you should make fundamental changes to the shape of the material you’re paraphrasing—you can’t just change a word or two and call it a paraphrase—you should stay close to its original level of detail (“Decide,” 2006).

- **Summaries** are brief, condensed restatements of the main ideas in a text. Unlike paraphrases, summaries are considerably shorter and broader in focus than the original. They provide a concise synopsis of some portion of the text (“Decide,” 2006). Paraphrases and summaries don’t need to use quotation marks, but they must be accompanied by an in-text citation that corresponds with a References entry.

When should I use which?

When writing analytical papers, you want to quote as often as you need to, but not so much that it overwhelms your own voice. As the UHV Academic Center puts it, “you want to avoid having a paper that is a string of quotes with occasional input from you” (“Decide,” 2006).

Here are some guidelines for when to quote:

1. when it offers such unique phrasing that you couldn’t improve upon it;
2. when it would be difficult to paraphrase or summarize accurately; or
3. when you need to offer the reader a sense of the style or tone of the text itself.

Paraphrasing and summarizing work better if you’re more concerned about the ideas put forward than the particular wording used. A paraphrase keeps the text’s specificity; a summary provides an overview or context. Typically, you will use a summary when you are giving a synopsis that you will not analyze directly, whereas you will employ a paraphrase in order to segue into more in-depth analysis. Often, summary and paraphrase are blended together depending on the focus of your writing, so pay attention to which details are most important and which might be less important to your particular analysis.

References

- Decide When to Quote, Paraphrase & Summarize. (2006). University of Houston-Victoria Academic Center Web. Retrieved from <http://www.uhv.edu/student-success-center/resources/a-d/decide-when-to-quote-paraphrase-and-summarize/>.
- Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing. (2013). The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Web. Retrieved from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/1/>.