

Incorporating Research into Writing: Summarizing & Paraphrasing

Incorporating research into your writing helps you:

- Bolster your point with the credibility or reputation of the source.
- Identify others' opinions, theories, and personal explanations.
- Present assertions of fact that are open to dispute.
- Present statistics.
- Establish your ethos as a good, reliable scholar/researcher.
- Let readers know where to find information on your topic.

Scan a book or article to determine if it will be useful to your paper.

- **Read** the title and the first and last paragraphs to find the argument or main point of the article. If this is a scientific paper, there may also be an abstract.
- **Identify** the main point or argument of the article.
 - Does this topic have to do with your own?
 - Can you use the assertions, ideas, or facts in this paper to support your own argument?
- If this article is useful to you, you can then **pull parts or even quotations** from it.
 - Be sure to understand the full argument of the paper before you begin to quote from it.

Do I have to agree with every source I use in my paper?

- You can include quotations that contradict your own point! Recognizing other points of view will make your paper stronger. Just remember that after you acknowledge other points of view, you must then respond to them.

What's the difference between a paraphrase, a summary, and a quote?

- **Paraphrase**—captures the idea of the author without using the author's exact wording. It uses more detail than a summary. A paraphrase:
 - is similar in length to the original source;
 - does not use the author's exact words, unless you put them in quotation marks;
 - does not use the author's sentence structure (copying sentence structure without citation is considered plagiarism); and
 - requires an in-text citation.
- **Summary**—captures the idea of the author without a lot of detail and without the author's exact wording. A summary:
 - is much shorter than the original source;
 - does not use the author's exact words, unless you put them in quotation marks;
 - does not use the author's sentence structure (copying sentence structure without citation is considered plagiarism); and
 - requires an in-text citation.

- **Quote**—uses the exact words from the source. A quote:
 - uses another’s written or spoken words;
 - always uses quotation marks; and
 - requires an in-text citation.

You will want to summarize and paraphrase most often.

- Putting source material in your own words shows readers that you have a true understanding of that material. Also, to restate in your own words the full meaning of a phrase or passage helps readers understand difficult, complex, jargon-riddled or ambiguous passages. Such passages, if quoted, will still require extensive explanation in order to be understood.
- **Questions to ask yourself before you decide to quote directly:**
 - Why do I want to include this quotation? Does this quote move my argument forward?
 - Is this quote too long? Should I choose one or two sentences, or parts of a sentence, that best reflects that idea that interests me?
 - Would a paraphrase be better?
 - For more tips on direct quotes, see the handout “Incorporating Research into Writing: Tips for Direct Quotes.”

How do I paraphrase or summarize a passage?

- First, **read and reread your source** until you understand exactly what it is saying.
- **Write down the relevant information from the source.** At this point, you may still be using phrasing and language from the source.
- Next, **without looking at the source, rewrite this information into your own words** and sentences so it becomes a coherent part of your paper written in your own style.
- **Check your new sentences to be sure that you are not using the original source words and/or sentence structure.** If you must use the original words, place them in quotation marks.
- **For a summary, ask yourself what the main point of the passage is.** Focus on that and leave out any details that are not necessary to make your point.
- **Do not include your own ideas or commentary in the body of the summary or paraphrase.** You don’t want your reader to become confused about which information is yours and which belongs to the source.
- **Always document any ideas that are not your own.** Failure to document ideas that are not your own (whether they are summarized, paraphrased, or quoted) constitutes plagiarism.

Combine quotes with a paraphrase.

- Sometimes, an author’s phrase is especially suited to your point. In this case, you can **paraphrase the passage but use the phrase or term used by the author.**
 - **Example:** Tania Modleski suggests that “if television is considered by some to be a vast wasteland, soap operas are thought to be the least nourishing spot in the desert” (123).
 - **Revised:** In her critique of soap operas, Tania Modleski argues that some view television as “a vast wasteland” and soap operas as “the least nourishing spot in the desert” (123).