

## Using Sources Effectively

There are three ways to incorporate the work of other authors into your own argument without being accused of plagiarism -- **quoting**, **paraphrasing**, and **summarizing**. Each method has its strengths. Using the three methods effectively makes your paper stand out.

### Basic Steps

1. Introduce the material
2. Three ways of presenting the material: Quoting/Paraphrasing/Summarizing
3. Cite the source

### Introduce the Material

**Author + Verb = Signal Phrase** (because it signals to the reader that you are bringing in a source).

*J. Hillis Miller argues* that *Great Expectations* provides “the most unified and concentrated expression of Dickens’ abiding sense of the world” (Citation).

Choose verbs that describe what the author is doing in the passage without repeating “writes.”

#### Verb Choices:

acknowledges	admits	advises	agrees	argues	asserts	believes
claims	concludes	contends	concur	confirms	criticizes	declares
disagrees	discusses	disputes	emphasizes	explains	observes	offers
opposes	replies	reports	responds	reveals	suggests	writes

### Quoting

**When to use it:** We quote when the author has said something so well that we want those *exact words* in our paper. We can also choose to quote because we either agree with the author’s opinion and want to emphasize it, or we disagree, and we want to show that we are presenting differing opinions.

**How to use it:** Use the exact words of the author. In general, short quotes are better than long quotes. With long quotes we should consider whether we really need all of it in the author’s words. Next, we must integrate the quote smoothly into our own writing.

#### Examples:

Atkinson *explains* the importance of place in Thoreau’s writing noting that he was “bone of Concord’s bone and flesh of Concord’s flesh” (citation).

Use an ellipsis (...) to remove words that are not necessary or use brackets [ ] to add something to make the sentence flow. Here is an example:

**Original:** “We are a people in motion, whether on the Trail of Tears, Route 66 or the Interstate System. From Jack Kerouac to Willie Nelson, the lure of the road and the promise of the journey still hold us. And it was Lewis and Clark who gave us our first great national road story” (Ronda 99).

**Quote in student’s paper.** “[Americans] are a people in motion .... and the promise of the journey still hold[s] us” (citation).

**Commented [A1]:** Author + Verb = Signal Phrase

**Commented [A2]:** Author + Verb = Signal Phrase

**Commented [A3]:** We choose the part of the quote that is most important.

**Commented [A4]:** The brackets add material that helps the quote make sense in our sentence. Just remember that leaving words out or adding in brackets must not change the meaning of the original.

## Paraphrasing

**When to use it:** Use paraphrasing when the *details* of the source but not the exact words are important to your argument. Paraphrasing is harder because we must put the idea in our own words while retaining the meaning of the original. Here are some rules for paraphrasing:

1. Retain the original meaning, including any opinions expressed by the author.
2. Rewrite the material to be about the same length as the original.
3. Include a citation.
4. Put in quotation marks around any language retained from the original.

**How to use it:** What doesn't work is staring at the passage and trying to come up with different words to say the same thing. (Or worse still, using a thesaurus to change a word here or there!)

Here's a method that does work:

1. Read the original several times until you are sure that you understand it.
2. Put the original away and write down the ideas in your own words.
3. Check against the original to make sure that you have not retained any of the original language and that your paraphrase is about the same length as the original.

## Examples:

**Original:** "As Franklin repeatedly stressed in letters to his son, America's strength would be its proud middling people, a class of frugal and industrious shopkeepers and tradesmen who were assertive of their rights and proud of their status. [From Isaacson, Walter. "Benjamin Franklin Joins the Revolution." *Smithsonian*. August 2003. 81-89.]

**Paraphrase in student's paper:** Franklin often told his son that he believed America would be strong because of its new middle class of businessmen who were believed in their rights and were proud of their social standing (Isaacson 83).

**Commented [A5]:** Ensure you cite your source in the format required by your instructor.

## Summarizing

**When to use it:** We use summaries when only the *main ideas* are necessary for our argument. Summaries are often used when we want to include research findings or implications but do not need to include the details of the actual research.

**How to use it:** Summarizing is generally easier than paraphrasing, but it is still important to remember that the summary must be in our own words. Here are some rules for summarizing:

1. The simplest way to arrive at a summary of an article is to look at the thesis and the topic sentences of each paragraph.
2. Read those until you are sure you understand.
3. Then look away and write the summary in your own words.
4. As with quotes and paraphrases, we use the signal phrase (author + verb) to make the summary flow smoothly into the argument.

## Cite Your Source

Don't forget to cite your sources in the proper format. Whenever you provide information and ideas that don't come from your own brain, they are considered someone else's and need to be cited.

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