

Incorporating Source Material

Many assignments draw on your reading of outside sources. Integrating source material into your own writing involves paraphrase, summary, and direct quotation. All three must be documented: see handout *820.9.3 Documenting Sources*.

PARAPHRASE

When you paraphrase, you create a parallel text. Using your own words, you blend the content of a source smoothly into your own writing, while at the same time, acknowledging the source. Your paraphrase might be as long, or even longer, than the original wording.

One way to prepare a paraphrase is to read the whole passage carefully, then close the book, and write the entire paraphrase. Afterwards, check it against the original for accuracy. If you write the paraphrase with one eye on the source, you'll run the risk of copying the sentence structure or words of the original. This is plagiarism, even if you document the source. If you choose to reproduce key words or phrases from the original, use quotation marks. The reader should always know whose words are being used.

As an example, consider first this paragraph from Bill Schermbrucker's *The Aims and Strategies of Good Writing*:

Exploratory writing is the intellectual equivalent of a physical journey of Exploration. Like searching for gold, or for signs of life on Mars, or for a new route through the Rockies, intellectual Exploration is a search after truth or, if that can't be found, it's a search for a better understanding of the question you began with. Any time you find a question for which you have no answer; you're ready to Explore. If it's a simple question ("What's a hectare?") the journey ends at the nearest dictionary ("2.471 acres") and this is not worth writing about. A more complicated question ("Is the Metric system really better for Canada than the Imperial system of measurement?") isn't such a snap to answer; you have to investigate all sides of the question—you may find that the question itself is poorly framed and needs restarting—and see what progress you can make towards an answer. (57-58)

Below is an example of an unacceptable paraphrase. It stays too close to the sentence structure of the original and contains unacknowledged quotation (*in italics*). Even though it's documented, it is plagiarized:

Exploratory writing is like an actual *journey of exploration*. Like any explorer, you're engaged on a *search after truth*, or at least a *search for a better understanding of the question you began with*. All you need is a *question for which you have no answer . . .* (57-58).

Here is an acceptable version of the same passage. Key phrases have been quoted, but the quotations are indicated. The reader is left in no doubt about the source of the ideas:

Bill Schermbrucker compares exploratory writing to a "journey of exploration." The writer like any explorer in new terrain, is engaged in a "search for truth." The starting-point of her journey, he suggests, is a question which has no obvious or easy answer . . . (57-58).

Good transitions are vital when you paraphrase. If possible, use the transition both to introduce your source and to indicate its relevance to your discussion:

Smith takes an opposing view, contending that . . .

Evidence for this theory is in Jones's 2016 study, which concluded that . . .

Brown points to the decrease in the suicide rate, suggesting that . . .

See the list of verbs (page 4) which may be used to introduce paraphrase, summary, and quotation.

SUMMARY

Writing summaries is a useful research technique because as you read, you look for the author's purpose and method, and you distinguish between main ideas and supporting information. Only the main ideas are included in a summary. If you are writing an essay that draws on many sources, you will probably choose to summarize the sources rather than paraphrase them. Also, if you are drawing on detailed scientific articles, you will probably wish to summarize the author's methods and conclusions rather than present all the details of the study. Since you are only selecting the main points, your summary will be much shorter than a paraphrase.

Here is an example of a summary. Note that you still document the page number; if you are summarizing material that runs over several pages, simply give inclusive pagination (for example, 10-12):

In his *Aims and Strategies of Good Writing*, Bill Schermbrucker describes Exploratory writing as a

“search for truth” which begins with a complex question and moves carefully and systematically towards an answer (57-58).

See handout *840.1 The Summary* for further information on writing a summary.

QUOTATION

Direct quotation has the advantage of bringing your reader into immediate contact with the original text. You should quote frequently when the text itself is your subject, as in literary analysis where the quotations are evidence for the points you are making about the text. You may also choose to quote when the phrasing of the original text is so distinctive, striking or technical that no other words will do. You may quote words or phrases within a paraphrase when you cannot find accurate words of your own to substitute.

However, quotation can be over-used. Copying chunks from a source into your essay suggests you haven't found a way to understand and integrate the source into your writing (see **Sample Summary Version #1** below. When you paraphrase or summarize, you master the meaning of a passage, but when you quote, you sometimes merely copy.

Keep quotations to a minimum, except in essays about literature. The short segments you do decide to quote will have all the more force. When you quote to support a point, quote only as much as you need to make the point. Use ellipses (three spaced dots) in place of omitted material. Remember that your reader may easily stop reading a long quotation.

Introduce your quotations clearly and integrate them into your own sentence structure. Short quotations should be a part of your sentence, but be indicated by quotation marks. If the quotation is less than a complete sentence, the introduction should supply whatever words are needed to complete the sentence. If possible, identify the author in the introduction (then only the page number has to be given in the concluding documentation).

No: Writers may discover that not all questions make good Exploratory questions. “You may find that the question itself is badly framed and needs restating” (Schermbrucker 58).

Note the awkward shift from *writers* to *you*: the quotation doesn't follow clearly from the previous sentence.

Yes: According to Schermbrucker, the Exploratory writer may find “that the question itself is poorly framed and needs restating” (58).

To quote a longer extract (more than four lines, or one or more full sentences), write a complete introductory clause indicating the relevance of the material and ending with a colon. For a

long quotation, do not use block format. You only have to indent ten spaces on the left-hand margin. The indentation replaces the need for quotation marks.

Note that the documentation appears after the closing period. Here is the pattern:

Bill Schermbrucker offers some expert advice on Exploratory writing, including the following:

Exploratory writing is the intellectual equivalent of a physical journey of Exploration. Like searching for the site of Atlantis, for life elsewhere in the universe,... intellectual Exploration is made up of two elements or attitudes: first a search after truth; second, if Truth can't be found, then it's a search for a better understanding of the question you began with. (57)

VERBS USEFUL FOR INTRODUCING SOURCE MATERIAL

When you introduce a paraphrase, a summary, or quotation, choose the verb which most closely indicates what the writer is doing. Here are a few possibilities:

agree	consider	explore	relate
analyze	contrast	hold	speculate
argue	describe	hypothesize	stress
assert	develop	imply	suggest
claim	disagree	infer	summarize
compare	dispute	insist	
concede	dissent	outline	
conclude	emphasize	postulate	
concur	examine	propose	