Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing

In an oral presentation about the rhetoric of Abraham Lincoln, you quote a memorable line from the Gettysburg Address. For an essay on the Tet Offensive in the Vietnam War, you paraphrase arguments made by several commentators and summarize some key debates about that war. When you work with the ideas and words of others, you need to clearly distinguish those ideas and words from your own and give credit to their authors. This chapter will help you with the specifics of quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing source materials that you use in your writing.

Taking Notes

When you find material you think will be useful, take careful notes. How do you determine how much to record? You need to write down enough information so that when you refer to it later, you will be reminded of its main points and have a precise record of where it comes from.

- **Use a computer file, note cards, or a notebook**, labeling each entry with the information that will allow you to keep track of where it comes from—author, title, and the pages or the URL (or DOI [digital object identifier]). You needn't write down full bibliographic information (you can abbreviate the author's name and title) since you’ll include that information in your **WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY**.

- **Take notes in your own words, and use your own sentence patterns**. If you make a note that is a detailed **PARAPHRASE**, label it as such so that you’ll know to provide appropriate **DOCUMENTATION** if you use it.
If you find wording that you'd like to quote, be sure to enclose it in quotation marks to distinguish your source's words from your own. Double-check your notes to be sure any quoted material is accurately quoted — and that you haven't accidentally plagiarized your sources.

Label each note with a number to identify the source and a subject heading to relate the note to a subject, supporting point, or other element in your essay. Doing this will help you to sort your notes easily and match them up with your rough outline. Restrict each note to a single subject.

Here are a few examples of one writer's notes on a source discussing synthetic dyes, bladder cancer, and the use of animals to determine what causes cancers. Each note includes a subject heading and brief source information and identifies whether the source is quoted or paraphrased.

**Source 3**

**Synthetic dyes**

The first synthetic dye was mauve, invented in 1854 and derived from coal. Like other coal-derived dyes, it contained aromatic amines.

Steingraber, “Pesticides,” 976 — paraphrase

**Source 3**

**Synthetic dyes & cancer**

Bladder cancer was common among textile workers who used dyes. Steingraber: “By the beginning of the twentieth century, bladder cancer rates among this group of workers had skyrocketed.”

Steingraber, “Pesticides,” 976 — paraphrase and quote
Deciding Whether to Quote, Paraphrase, or Summarize

When it comes time to DRAFT, you’ll need to decide how to use any source you want to include—in other words, whether to quote, paraphrase, or summarize it. You might follow this rule of thumb: QUOTE texts when the wording is worth repeating or makes a point so well that no rewording will do it justice, when you want to cite the exact words of a known authority on your topic, when an authority’s opinions challenge or disagree with those of others, or when the source is one you want to emphasize. PARAPHRASE sources that are not worth quoting but contain details you need to include. SUMMARIZE longer passages whose main points are important but whose details are not.

Quoting

Quoting a source is a way of weaving someone else’s exact words into your text. You need to reproduce the source exactly, though you can modify it to omit unnecessary details (with ellipses) or to make it fit smoothly into your text (with brackets). You also need to distinguish quoted material from your own by enclosing short quotations in quotation marks, setting off longer quotes as a block, and using appropriate SIGNAL PHRASES.

Incorporate short quotations into your text, enclosed in quotation marks. If you are following MLA STYLE, short quotations are defined as four typed
lines or fewer; if using APA STYLE, as below, short means fewer than forty words.

Gerald Graff (2003) has argued that colleges make the intellectual life seem more opaque than it needs to be, leaving many students with "the misconception that the life of the mind is a secret society for which only an elite few qualify" (p. 1).

If you are quoting three lines or fewer of poetry, run them in with your text, enclosed in quotation marks. Separate lines with slashes, leaving one space on each side of the slashes.

Emma Lazarus almost speaks for the Statue of Liberty with the words inscribed on its pedestal: "Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore" (58).

Set off long quotations block style. If you are using MLA style, set off quotations of five or more typed lines by indenting the quote one inch (or ten to fourteen spaces) from the left margin. If you are using APA style, indent quotes of forty or more words one-half inch (or five to seven spaces) from the left margin. In either case, do not use quotation marks, and put any parenthetical documentation after any end punctuation.

Nonprofit organizations such as Oxfam and Habitat for Humanity rely on visual representations of the poor. What better way to get our attention, asks rhetorician Diana George:

In a culture saturated by the image, how else do we convince Americans that—despite the prosperity they see all around them—there is real need out there? The solution for most nonprofits has been to show the despair. To do that they must represent poverty as something that can be seen and easily recognized: fallen down shacks and trashed out public housing, broken windows, dilapidated porches, barefoot kids with stringy hair, emaciated old women and men staring out at the camera with empty eyes. (210)

If you are quoting four or more lines of poetry, they need to be set off block style in the same way.
Indicate any omissions with ellipses. You may sometimes delete words from a quotation that are unnecessary for your point. Insert three ellipsis marks (leaving a space before the first and after the last one) to indicate the deletion. If you omit a sentence or more in the middle of a quotation, put a period before the three ellipsis dots. Be careful not to distort the source’s meaning, however.

Faigley points out that Gore’s “Information Superhighway” metaphor “associated the economic prosperity of the 1950s and . . . 1960s facilitated by new highways with the potential for vast . . . commerce to be conducted over the Internet” (253).

According to Welch, “Television is more acoustic than visual. . . . One can turn one’s gaze away from the television, but one cannot turn one’s ears from it without leaving the area where the monitor leaks its aural signals into every corner” (102).

Indicate additions or changes with brackets. Sometimes you’ll need to change or add words in a quotation—to make the quotation fit grammatically within your sentence, for example, or to add a comment. In the following example, the writer changes the passage “one of our goals” to clarify the meaning of “our.”

Writing about the dwindling attention among some composition scholars to the actual teaching of writing, Susan Miller notes that “few discussions of writing pedagogy take it for granted that one of [writing teacher’s] goals is to teach how to write” (480).

Here’s an example of brackets used to add explanatory words to a quotation:

Barbosa observes that Buarque’s lyrics have long included “many a metaphor of saudades [yearning] so characteristic of fado music” (207).

Use punctuation correctly with quotations. When you incorporate a quotation into your text, you have to think about the end punctuation in the quoted material and also about any punctuation you need to add when you insert the quote into your own sentence.
Periods and commas. Put periods or commas inside closing quotation marks, except when you have parenthetical documentation at the end, in which case you put the period or comma after the parentheses.

"Country music," Tichi says, "is a crucial and vital part of the American identity" (23).

After long quotations set off block style with no quotation marks, however, the period goes before the documentation, as in the example on page 481.

Question marks and exclamation points. These go inside closing quotation marks if they are part of the quoted material but outside when they are not. If there's parenthetical documentation at the end of the quotation, any punctuation that's part of your sentence comes after it.

Speaking at a Fourth of July celebration in 1852, Frederick Douglass asked, "What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence?" (35).

Who can argue with W. Charisse Goodman's observation that media images persuade women that "thinness equals happiness and fulfillment" (53)?

Colons and semicolons. These always go outside closing quotation marks.

It's hard to argue with W. Charisse Goodman's observation that media images persuade women that "thinness equals happiness and fulfillment"; nevertheless, American women today are more overweight than ever (53).

Paraphrasing

When you paraphrase, you restate information from a source in your own words, using your own sentence structures. Paraphrase when the source material is important but the original wording is not. Because it includes all the main points of the source, a paraphrase is usually about the same length as the original.

Here is a paragraph about synthetic dyes and cancer, followed by two paraphrases of it that demonstrate some of the challenges of paraphrasing:
In 1938, in a series of now-classic experiments, exposure to synthetic dyes derived from coal and belonging to a class of chemicals called aromatic amines was shown to cause bladder cancer in dogs. These results helped explain why bladder cancers had become so prevalent among dyestuffs workers. With the invention of mauve in 1854, synthetic dyes began replacing natural plant-based dyes in the coloring of cloth and leather. By the beginning of the twentieth century, bladder cancer rates among this group of workers had skyrocketed, and the dog experiments helped unravel this mystery. The International Labor Organization did not wait for the results of these animal tests, however, and in 1921 declared certain aromatic amines to be human carcinogens. Decades later, these dogs provided a lead in understanding why tire-industry workers, as well as machinists and metalworkers, also began falling victim to bladder cancer: aromatic amines had been added to rubbers and cutting oils to serve as accelerants and antirust agents.

—Sandra Steingraber, “Pesticides, Animals, and Humans”

The following paraphrase borrows too much of the language of the original or changes it only slightly, as the highlighted words and phrases show:

**UNACCEPTABLE PARAPHRASE: WORDING TOO CLOSE**

Now-classic experiments in 1938 showed that when dogs were exposed to aromatic amines, chemicals used in synthetic dyes derived from coal, they developed bladder cancer. Similar cancers were prevalent among dyestuffs workers, and these experiments helped to explain why. Mauve, a synthetic dye, was invented in 1854, after which cloth and leather manufacturers replaced most of the natural plant-based dyes with synthetic dyes. By the early twentieth century, this group of workers had skyrocketing rates of bladder cancer, a mystery the dog experiments helped to unravel. As early as 1921, though, before the test results proved the connection, the International Labor Organization had labeled certain aromatic amines carcinogenic. Even so, decades later many metalworkers, machinists, and tire-industry workers began developing bladder cancer. The animal tests helped researchers understand that rubbers and cutting oils contained aromatic amines as accelerants and antirust agents (Steingraber 976).
The next paraphrase uses original language but follows the sentence structure of Steingraber's text too closely:

**UNACCEPTABLE PARAPHRASE: SENTENCE STRUCTURE TOO CLOSE**

In 1938, several pathbreaking experiments showed that being exposed to synthetic dyes that are made from coal and belong to a type of chemicals called aromatic amines caused dogs to get bladder cancer. These results helped researchers identify why cancers of the bladder had become so common among textile workers who worked with dyes. With the development of mauve in 1854, synthetic dyes began to be used instead of dyes based on plants in the dyeing of leather and cloth. By the end of the nineteenth century, rates of bladder cancer among these workers had increased dramatically, and the experiments using dogs helped clear up this oddity. The International Labor Organization anticipated the results of these tests on animals, though, and in 1921 labeled some aromatic amines carcinogenic. Years later these experiments with dogs helped researchers explain why workers in the tire industry, as well as metalworkers and machinists, also started dying of bladder cancer: aromatic amines had been put into rubbers and cutting oils as rust inhibitors and accelerants (Steingraber 976).

**Patchwriting**, a third form of unacceptable paraphrase, combines the other two. Composition researcher Rebecca Moore Howard defines it as "copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes." Here is a patchwrite of the first two sentences of the original source: (The source's exact words are shaded in yellow; paraphrases are in blue.)

**PATCHWRITE**

Scientists have known for a long time that chemicals in the environment can cause cancer. For example, in 1938, in a series of important experiments, being exposed to synthetic dyes made out of coal and belonging to a kind of chemicals called aromatic amines was shown to cause dogs to develop bladder cancer. These experiments explain why this type of cancer had become so common among workers who handled dyes.
Here is an acceptable paraphrase of the entire passage:

**ACCEPTABLE PARAPHRASE**

Biologist Sandra Steingraber explains that pathbreaking experiments in 1938 demonstrated that dogs exposed to aromatic amines (chemicals used in coal-derived synthetic dyes) developed cancers of the bladder that were similar to cancers common among dyers in the textile industry. After mauve, the first synthetic dye, was invented in 1854, leather and cloth manufacturers replaced most natural dyes made from plants with synthetic dyes, and by the early 1900s textile workers had very high rates of bladder cancer. The experiments with dogs proved the connection, but years before, in 1921, the International Labor Organization had labeled some aromatic amines carcinogenic. Even so, years later many metal-workers, machinists, and workers in the tire industry started to develop unusually high rates of bladder cancer. The experiments with dogs helped researchers understand that the cancers were caused by aromatic amines used in cutting oils to inhibit rust and in rubbers as accelerants (976).

**Some guidelines for paraphrasing**

- **Use your own words and sentence structure.** It is acceptable to use some words from the original, but as much as possible, the phrasing and sentence structures should be your own.

- **Introduce paraphrased text with SIGNAL PHRASES.**

- **Put in quotation marks any of the source's original phrasing that you use.**

- **Indicate the source.** Although the wording may be yours, the ideas and information come from another source; be sure to name the author and include DOCUMENTATION to avoid the possibility of PLAGIARISM.

**Summarizing**

A summary states the main ideas in a source concisely and in your own words. Unlike a paraphrase, a summary does not present all the details, and it is generally as brief as possible. Summaries may boil down an entire
book or essay into a single sentence, or they may take a paragraph or more to present the main ideas. Here, for example, is a one-sentence summary of the Steingraber paragraph:

Steingraber explains that experiments with dogs demonstrated that aromatic amines, chemicals used in synthetic dyes, cutting oils, and rubber, cause bladder cancer (976).

In the context of an essay, the summary might take this form:

Medical researchers have long relied on experiments using animals to expand understanding of the causes of disease. For example, biologist and ecologist Sandra Steingraber notes that in the second half of the nineteenth century, the rate of bladder cancer soared among textile workers. According to Steingraber, experiments with dogs demonstrated that synthetic chemicals in dyes used to color the textiles caused the cancer (976).

**Some guidelines for summarizing**

- **Include only the main ideas; leave out the details.** A summary should include just enough information to give the reader the gist of the original. It is always much shorter than the original, sometimes even as brief as one sentence.
- **Use your own words.** If you quote phrasing from the original, enclose the phrase in quotation marks.
- **Indicate the source.** Although the wording may be yours, the ideas and information come from another source. Name the author, either in a signal phrase or parentheses, and include an appropriate **IN-TEXT CITATION** to avoid the possibility of **PLAGIARISM**.

**Introducing Source Materials Using Signal Phrases**

You need to introduce quotations, paraphrases, and summaries clearly, usually letting readers know who the author is—and, if need be, something about his or her credentials. Consider this sentence:
Professor and textbook author Elaine Tyler May argues that many high school history books are too bland to interest young readers (531).

The beginning ("Professor and textbook author Elaine Tyler May argues") functions as a signal phrase, telling readers who is making the assertion and why she has the authority to speak on the topic—and making clear that everything between the signal phrase and the parenthetical citation comes from that source. Since the signal phrase names the author, the parenthetical citation includes only the page number; had the author not been identified in the signal phrase, she would have been named in the parentheses:

Even some textbook authors believe that many high school history books are too bland to interest young readers (May 531).

MLA and APA have different conventions for constructing signal phrases. In MLA, the language you use in a signal phrase can be neutral—like X says or Y thinks or according to Z. Or it can suggest something about the STANCE—the source’s or your own. The example above referring to the textbook author uses the verb argues, suggesting that what she says is open to dispute (or that the writer believes it is). How would it change your understanding if the signal verb were observes or suggests?

In addition to the names of sources’ authors, signal phrases often give readers information about institutional affiliations and positions authors have, their academic or professional specialties, and any other information that lets readers judge the credibility of the sources. You should craft each signal phrase you use so as to highlight the credentials of the author. Here are some examples:

A study done by Anthony M. Armocida, professor of psychology at Duke University, showed that . . .

The signal phrase identifies the source’s author, his professional position, and his university affiliation, emphasizing his title.

Science writer Isaac McDougal argues that . . .

This phrase acknowledges that the source’s author may not have scholarly credentials but is a published writer; it’s a useful construction if the source doesn’t provide much information about the writer.
Writing in *Psychology Today*, Amanda Chao-Fitz notes that . . .

This is the sort of signal phrase you use if you have no information on the author; you establish credibility on the basis of the publication in which the source appears.

If you’re writing using APA style, signal phrases are typically briefer, giving only the author’s last name and the date of publication:

According to Benzinger (2010), . . .
Quartucci (2011) observed that . . .

**SOME COMMON SIGNAL VERBS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>acknowledges</th>
<th>claims</th>
<th>disagrees</th>
<th>observes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>admits</td>
<td>comments</td>
<td>disputes</td>
<td>points out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advises</td>
<td>concludes</td>
<td>emphasizes</td>
<td>reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agrees</td>
<td>concurs</td>
<td>grants</td>
<td>rejects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>argues</td>
<td>confirms</td>
<td>illustrates</td>
<td>reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asserts</td>
<td>contends</td>
<td>implies</td>
<td>responds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>believes</td>
<td>declares</td>
<td>insists</td>
<td>suggests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>charges</td>
<td>denies</td>
<td>notes</td>
<td>thinks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Verb tenses.** MLA and APA also have different conventions regarding the tenses of verbs in signal phrases. MLA requires present-tense verbs (*writes, asserts, notes*) in signal phrases to introduce a work you are quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing.

In *Poor Richard’s Almanack*, Benjamin Franklin notes, “He that cannot obey, cannot command” (739).

If, however, you are referring to the act of writing or saying something rather than simply quoting someone’s words, you might not use the present tense. The writer of the following sentence focuses on the year in which the source was written—therefore, the verb is necessarily in the past tense:
Back in 1941, Kenneth Burke wrote that “the ethical values of work are in its application of the competitive equipment to cooperative ends” (316).

If you are following APA style, use the past tense or present-perfect tense to introduce sources composed in the past.

Dowdall, Crawford, and Wechsler (1998) observed that women attending women’s colleges are less likely to engage in binge drinking than are women who attend coeducational colleges (p. 713).

APA requires the present tense, however, to discuss the results of an experiment or to explain conclusions that are generally agreed on.

The findings of this study suggest that excessive drinking has serious consequences for college students and their institutions.

The authors of numerous studies agree that smoking and drinking among adolescents are associated with lower academic achievement.

IF YOU NEED MORE HELP

See Chapter 50 for help ACKNOWLEDGING SOURCES and giving credit to the sources you use. See also the SAMPLE RESEARCH PAPERS to see how sources are cited in MLA and APA styles. And see Chapter 3 if you’re writing a SUMMARY/RESPONSE essay.