

# Schreiner University

## Writing Center Workshop: Tips for Using Sources in a Research Paper\*

Three basic ways of using outside sources: 1. Summary; 2. Paraphrase; 3. Quotation

In each instance, your source must clearly be acknowledged in the paper. **Summary, paraphrase, and quotations never include your opinion.** The reasons for using a strategy vary.

### 1. Summary: **presents the main idea in a condensed and concise form.**

Tip: To prepare yourself for summarizing, take careful and thorough notes while reading.

#### Reasons for summarizing:

- a. To comprehend the meaning and the context of a book, essay, article.
- b. To report your understanding of the information to your readers.

#### Basic Guidelines for Summarizing a Complex Essay:

- Be comprehensive: Include in your summary all those ideas that are essential to the author's development of the thesis.
- Be concise: Eliminate repetitions. Your summary should be considerably shorter than the source.
- Be coherent: It should make sense as a paragraph in its own right.
- Be independent: Use your own voice, but do not misrepresent or distort the author's idea with your own commentary or criticism.

#### Preparing to Summarize:

- Pre-read the material
- Take careful and thorough notes
- Use your own language in the notes
- Read the material at least twice
- Identify the thesis and/or purpose
- Consider how the idea is developed

### 2. Paraphrase: **recapitulates, point-by-point, another person's ideas using your own language.**

#### Reasons for paraphrasing:

- a. To pause in order to make sense of what you have read, so that you can succeed in working out ideas that at first seem beyond your comprehension.
- b. To present ideas or evidence whenever there is no special reason for using a direct quotation.
- c. To give your readers an accurate and comprehensive account of ideas taken from a source----ideas that you intend to explain, interpret, or disagree with in your essay.

#### Basic Guidelines for Writing a Paraphrase:

- The sentence and the vocabulary do not duplicate those of the original. *You cannot merely substitute synonyms for key words and leave the sentences otherwise unchanged; that is plagiarism in spirit, if not in fact.* Also, the word for word substitution does not indicate that you comprehend the ideas.
- The level of abstraction should be consistent with the original: it should be neither more general nor more specific.
- If you do not understand a sentence that you must paraphrase, consider the following steps:
  - Look up difficult words
  - Think of what the words mean and how they are used together

- Consider how the sentences are formed and how they fit into the context of the entire paragraph
  - Test your understanding by writing it all out
  - A good paraphrase is coherent and readable without requiring reference to the original essay.
3. Quotation: **directly cites a passage word for word and uses quotation marks around the passage.**

**Reasons for using Quotations:**

- a. To support your idea: quoting a known authority substantiates the evidence you have gathered.
- b. To preserve vivid or technical language: you will want to quote a sentence that is compact or that relies on a striking image to make its point. It is also important to retain the precise terminology of a technical or legal document.
- c. To comment on the quotation: If you are analyzing or commenting specifically on another writer's statements, you should quote the writer so that the reader can appreciate your commentary.
- d. To distance yourself from the quotation: Writers generally use quotations to distinguish between the writer of the essay and the writer being cited in the essay, or you might want to distinguish yourself from your own choice of language.

**Basic Guidelines for Using Quotations:**

- Use quotations sparingly. Directly quote only when you have a clear reason for doing so.
- Avoid placing quotations at the very beginning of a paragraph; quotations should not replace or be used as topic sentences. Quotations generally belong in the body of a paragraph.
- Let the quotation make its point; your job is to explain or interpret its meaning, not to translate it word for word.

*Two Syntactical Points for introducing a direct quotation into your essay:*

- 1) For a quotation that is separated from the preceding sentence:
  - Comma or colon, depending on sentence structure, and quotation marks separate citation and quotation.
  - The first letter of the quotation is capitalized.
  - You are distinguishing between your ideas and those of your source.
- Example:

*With a Comma:* Ernest Hemingway said, "What is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after."

*With a Colon:* Ernest Hemingway distinguished the moral from the immoral through a simple maxim: "What is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after."

- 2) For a quotation that is integrated into the body of a sentence:
  - Only quotation marks separate citation and quotation.
  - The first letter of the quotation is not capitalized.
  - You are integrating your ideas with those of your source.
- Example:

Ernest Hemingway believed that "what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after."

*As a rule, the writer has the obligation to insert quotation marks when using a source's exact words, whether written or oral.*

\*All information is taken from the following sources:

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. 82-91.  
 Spatt, Brenda. *Writing From Sources*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. 3-115.