

Quoting, Paraphrasing & Summarising

Much of the work you produce at university will involve the important ideas, writings and discoveries of experts in your field of study. The work of other writers can provide you with information, evidence and ideas, but must be incorporated into your work carefully. Quoting, paraphrasing and summarising are all different ways of including the works of others in your assignments.

If your work is only made up of copied (plagiarised) passages from books or journals, you are likely to be penalised by your lecturers. They expect you to demonstrate an understanding of the major ideas/concepts in the discipline. Paraphrasing and summarising allows you to develop and demonstrate your understanding and interpretation of a text. They are powerful tools for reshaping information to suit the many writing tasks that will be required of you. They also require important analytical and writing skills which are crucial to success at university.

What are the Differences?

Quotations

- match the source word for word
- are usually a brief segment of the text
- appear between quotation marks
- must be attributed to the original source

Paraphrasing

- does not match the source word for word
- involves putting a passage from a source into your own words
- changes the words or phrasing of a passage, but retains and fully communicates the original meaning
- must be attributed to the original source

Summarising

- does not match the source word for word
- involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, but including only the main point(s)
- presents a broad overview, so is usually much shorter than the original text
- must be attributed to the original source

Quotations

What is a Quotation?

A quotation is an exact reproduction of spoken or written words. Direct quotes can provide strong evidence, act as an authoritative voice, or support a writer's statements. For example:

Critical debates about the value of popular culture often raise the spectres of Americanisation and cultural imperialism, particular issues for a 'provincial' culture. However, as Bell and Bell (1993) point out in their study of Australian-American cultural relations: "culture is never simply imposed 'from above' but is negotiated through existing patterns and traditions." (Bell & Bell 1993, p. 9)

How to Quote

Make sure that you have a good reason to use a direct quotation. Quoting should be done sparingly and should support your own work, not replace it. For example, make a point in your own words, then support it with an authoritative quote.

- Every direct quotation should appear between quotation marks (" ") and exactly reproduce text, including punctuation and capital letters.
- A short quotation often works well integrated into a sentence.
- Longer quotations (more than 3 lines of text) should start on a new line, be indented and in italics.

When to Quote

- when the author's words convey a powerful meaning.
- when you want to use the author as an authoritative voice in your own writing.
- to introduce an author's position you may wish to discuss.
- to support claims in, or provide evidence for, your writing.

Paraphrasing

What is Paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing is a way of presenting a text, keeping the same meaning, but using different words. Paraphrasing is used with short sections of text, such as phrases and sentences.

A paraphrase may result in a longer, rather than shorter, version of the original text. It offers an alternative to using direct quotations and helps students to integrate evidence/ source material into assignments. Paraphrasing is also a useful skill for making notes from readings, note-taking in lectures, and explaining information in tables, charts and diagrams.

How to Paraphrase

- Start by reading a short text and highlighting the main points as you read.
- Rewrite each main point, sentence by sentence, using synonyms (words or expression which have a similar meaning) where possible.
- If you use any unique or specialist phrases, use quotation marks (' ').
- Change the sentence structure:
 - Break up a long sentence into two smaller ones
 - Combine two short sentences and simplify their structure
 - Change the voice (active/passive).
 - Change the order in which ideas are presented (as long as they still make sense in a different order)

When to Paraphrase

Paraphrase short sections of work only; a sentence or two or a short paragraph.

- As an alternative to a direct quotation.
- To rewrite someone else's ideas without changing the meaning.
- To express someone else's ideas in your own words.
- To support claims in, or provide evidence for, your writing.

Summarising

What is a Summary?

A summary is an overview of a text. The main idea is given, but details, examples and formalities are left out. Used with longer texts, the main aim of summarising is to reduce or condense a text to its most important ideas. Summarising is a useful skill for making notes from readings and in lectures, writing an abstract/synopsis and incorporating material in assignments.

How to Summarise

The amount of detail you include in a summary will vary according to the length of the original text, how much information you need and how selective you are:

- Start by reading a short text and highlighting the main points as you read.
- Reread the text and make notes of the main points, leaving out examples, evidence etc.
- Without the text, rewrite your notes in your own words; restate the main idea at the beginning plus all major points.

When to Summarise

Summarise long sections of work, like a long paragraph, page or chapter.

- To outline the main points of someone else's work in your own words, without the details or examples.
- To include an author's ideas using fewer words than the original text.
- To briefly give examples of several differing points of view on a topic.
- To support claims in, or provide evidence for, your writing.

Source:

<http://www.lc.unsw.edu>.