

Using Outside Sources



In order to successfully incorporate research into your essay, it is necessary to read all your sources critically. Then you can decide how to use them. Some sources may provide background information, others will support your thesis, and others will present examples. These different purposes may guide you in deciding whether to quote, paraphrase, or summarize.

Whether you quote, paraphrase, or summarize, it is *always* necessary to attribute the material to the original author(s). Be sure to clarify which ideas you get from others and which ideas are your own.

Quoting

- **Quoting involves noting a source's exact words. They must match the original source word for word.**
- **Use a direct quote for:**
 - Wording that is so memorable or powerful, or expresses a point so perfectly, that you cannot change it without weakening the meaning you need
 - Authors' opinions you wish to emphasize
 - A writer's words that you want to analyze—when each word is important.
 - Authors' words that show you are considering multiple perspectives
 - Respected authorities whose opinions support your ideas
 - Authors whose opinions challenge or vary greatly from those of others in the field

Paraphrasing

- **Paraphrasing involves putting a passage from a source into your own words.**

When you paraphrase, you often are taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly.
- **Use paraphrasing for:**
 - Passages you do not wish to quote but whose details are important to your point.
- **When you paraphrase to clarify or explain, your paraphrase usually is longer than the subject passage.**

Summarizing

- **Summarizing involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s).**

Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.
- **Use summarizing for:**
 - Long passages whose main ideas are important to your point but whose details are not

Why use Quotations, Paraphrases, and Summaries?

- Provide support for claims or add credibility to your writing
- Refer to work that leads up to the work you are now doing
- Give examples of several points of view on a subject
- Call attention to a position that you wish to agree or disagree with
- Highlight a particularly striking phrase, sentence, or passage by quoting the original
- Expand the breadth or depth of your writing

Integrating Quotations into Your Text

- **In college writing, quotations need to be smoothly and clearly linked to the surrounding sentences in your essay.**

In most cases, you need to introduce the source of the quotation and use a signal verb to provide such a link. The signal verb must be appropriate to the idea you are expressing. A list of signal verbs can be found on this sheet.

- **In-text citations document material from other sources with both signal phrases and parenthetical references.**

Signal phrases introduce the material, often including the author's name and qualifications (ex: Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood; or Thomas Friedman, columnist for the *New York Times*). The qualifications tell a reader why they should pay attention to this source.

Parenthetical references direct you to full bibliographic entries in a list of works cited at the end of the text. This information tells a reader who is speaking, why we should listen to them, and how we should feel about it.

- **Common signal verbs**

acknowledges	advises	agrees	allows	answers	asserts
believes	charges	claims	concludes	concur	confirms
criticizes	declares	describes	disagrees	discusses	disputes
emphasizes	expresses	interprets	lists	objects	observes
offers	opposes	remarks	replies	reports	responds
reveals	states	suggests	writes		

Examples

- **Without a source introduction and signal verb**

In *Death of a Salesman* [by Arthur Miller], Willy Loman dreams the wrong dreams and idealizes the wrong ideals. “He has lived on his smile and on his hopes, survived from sale to sale, been sustained by the illusion that he has countless friends in his territory, that everything will be all right” (Brown 97).

This sentence fails to introduce the source, identifying the author only in parentheses after the quotation. Therefore, no signal phrase connects the author to the quotation, which appears abruptly.

The following revision includes a signal verb (*captures*) and introduces the source’s author (*Brown*) to make the link between the quotation and the text easier to recognize.

In *Death of a Salesman* [by Arthur Miller], Willy Loman dreams the wrong dreams and idealizes the wrong ideals. *Brown captures* Loman’s misguided perceptions: “He has lived on his smile and on his hopes, survived from sale to sale, been sustained by the illusion that he has countless friends in his territory, that everything will be all right” (97).

- **With a source introduction and signal verb**

Mike Rose, a nationally recognized authority on education, claims that learning is facilitated not by fear but by “hope, everyday heroics, the power and play of the human mind” (242).

Here, the use of the signal verb *claims* makes it clear that the quotation is by Rose. The author used the verb *claims* to indicate that other authorities might disagree with Rose. Verbs like *notes* or *writes* are neutral and can be used by themselves. Verbs like *interprets*, *claims*, or *opposes* suggest how a speaker feels about a statement and will require more complex phrasing:

In her essay, *Harraway strongly opposes* those who condemn technology outright, arguing that we must not indulge in a “demonology of technology” (181).

The signal verb you choose allows you to characterize the author’s viewpoint or perspective as well as your own, so you should choose with care.