11.

USING SOURCES IN AN ESSAY

Learning Objectives

- recognize common knowledge
- apply strategies for quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing
- avoid accidental plagiarism

How to Quote, Paraphrase, and Summarize

Students are often concerned with the details of correct citation, such as when to include an author's name in parentheses, how to format an MLA bibliography, or how to indicate a quotation within a quotation. While formatting rules are important and helpful to know, what is more important is the ability to select and integrate meaningful source information into your writing and to give credit to the sources that provided that information. In most cases, you won't use MLA format again once you complete your English requirements. Other disciplines use other formats for citing sources. All disciplines, however, expect you to present information in your essays in a way that clarifies and supports your ideas and that credits the source of the information. Professors also except students to understand the larger ethical principles that guide choosing and using sources. This chapter explains what needs to be cited and why as well as how to incorporate references to sources into your own writing effectively.

What You *Don't* Need to Cite: Common Knowledge

Did you know that the Constitution was formally adopted (though not signed) on July 4, 1776? Are you familiar with the story, "Goldilocks and the Three Bears"? Did you realize that the famous American author,

William Faulkner, based most of his novels on a fictional version of the town in Mississippi where he grew up? Were you aware that TikTok is a social media app, especially popular with young people?

If the answer to those questions is no or a tentative yes, you might think that you'd need to site the information if you included it in an essay. Researching is all about learning new information, and when you're researching a topic that you're unfamiliar with, you will likely learn a lot about that topic. Most of what you learn will need to be cited if you include it in your final paper. Some information, however, will be considered common knowledge about your topic. Common knowledge consists of the generally accepted and usually factual information about a topic–something everyone who has studied the topic will be aware of.

So, even if you forget that date on which the Constitution was adopted and have to look it up, you won't need to cite that information because it's considered common knowledge. If you want to reference "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" in your essay, you don't have to find a book, create a works cited page entry, and cite the reference; the story is a fairly tale that no longer belongs to any one author. You may never have heard of William Faulkner, but if you were conducting thorough research on him, you'd quickly see that his novels and stories take place in fictional Yoknapatawpha County, which is very similar to his hometown of Lafayette County, and you'd understand that the information is common knowledge about this author, not something you need to cite. Common knowledge can also be something commonly known, such as the popularity of TikTok among young people. (If your essay needed to share specifically how popular it is, you'd look that up and cite the source.)

Determining whether something is common knowledge can be tricky. In general, if it's factual information you can find in several sources, you don't need to cite it. The real question to ask, though, is whether your readers will want to know where you got the information. For example, if you're writing a research essay in an English class, and the topic is the American author Carson McCullers, you'll quickly discover that she is considered a southern gothic writer. That would be considered common knowledge about the author, especially for an essay written in an English class. If, on the other hand, you're writing an essay about southern heritage for a sociology class, and you want to include information about Carson McCullers to help your readers understand your definition of southern heritage, you'll most likely need to cite the fact that McCullers is known as a southern gothic writer. In a sociology class, the fact is *not* common knowledge whereas in an English class, it is.

Consider, too, whether your readers will want you to verify a statement. If you write that "TikTok is the most popular social media app for teens" in an essay about the negative effects of social media, your readers going to wonder how you know that. Yes, it seems likely, but unless you're a well-known expert on TikTok use, you probably found that information in a source, so you need to cite it. Or maybe you didn't find the information in a source; maybe you're just pretty sure that's true. In that case, you'd be better off finding a source that provides data on how popular TikTok is among people of a certain age, and that specific information would definitely need to be cited.

When in doubt, though, cite information that you found in a source. Your professor might roll her eyes if

you cite something that's obviously common knowledge, but she's likely to fail your essay if you don't cite information that needs to be cited.

What Must Be Cited: Quotations, Paraphrases, and Summaries

All disciplines require that you cite quotations, paraphrases, and summaries, but how you cite this information differs depending on the discipline. In English and humanities classes, you use MLA format, which cites quotations, paraphrases, and summaries by including an in-text or parenthetical citation and a works cited page that lists each of the sources you quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. The in-text citations tell your readers that you are borrowing information from a source, and if possible, the in-text citations tell your readers exactly where you found the information within the source (e.g., on which page). Every source listed on the works cited page should have a corresponding in-text citation. That way, the reader who wants to know more about a specific fact or statement in your essay can turn to the works cited page and find out more about the source.

Don't confuse quoting with citing. Quotations are one way of integrating information into your essays, but putting quotation marks around a passage is *not citing that passage,* and quotations are not the only kinds of information you need to cite in an essay. You must cite the ideas, facts, information, studies, analyses, opinions, and anything else you find from a source, *even when you put that information into your own words*. All quotation marks do is tell a reader that you've used the exact words of the source. Citation means you use a specific format to indicate where you found the information you're sharing.

Quotations

Direct quotes are portions of a text taken word for word and presented alongside your own writing in an essay. Readers know when an author is using a direct quote because the author uses quotation marks and an in-text citation.

Example:

In his seminal work, David Bartholomae argues that "Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion" (4).

Direct quotes might also be formatted as a "block quote," which occurs if the borrowed language is longer than four lines of text. Long quotes are rarely appropriate in a shorter essay and should be used sparingly even in longer essays, but if you do need a long quotation, you present a block quote. A block quote is indented by 1/2 an inch, the citation is placed at the end of the block, and no quotation marks are used.

Example:

In his seminal work, David Bartholomae argues that

Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion—invent the

university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community (4).

Also, be careful when directly quoting because failing to write the text *exactly as it appears* in the original text is not an ethical use of direct quotes. A more serious error is failing to use quotation marks around the exact words and/or not citing the quoted information; both are forms of plagiarism.

When Should I Use Direct Quotes?

Generally, direct quotes should be used sparingly because you want to rely on your own understanding of material and avoid over-relying on another's words. Quoting is much easier than paraphrasing or summarizing because you have ready-made words that simply need to be woven into your essay, but if you quote too much, you probably won't understand what you're reading as fully as if you attempted to put the ideas into your own words. When we paraphrase or summarize, we have to truly understand what we've read or heard. Moreover, when you bring someone else's exact words into your writing, you are meshing that person's writing style with your own, and if you do that too often, with too many different sources, your essay might seem disjointed.

In general, you should quote when

- The author's terminology or phrasing is unique or especially poetic or compelling. When you quote, you retain the author's attitude and implied meanings, so if the implied meaning is important, or if something would be lost in translation, quote.
- You want to interpret someone's words. If you characterize a text's tone as being hostile, you'd need to quote specific words that contribute to that tone. If you want to show readers how a figure of speech works in a text, you should probably quote the figure of speech.
- You're presenting a counterargument. Quoting a counterargument is one way to avoid the straw man fallacy.
- You want to mix paraphrasing and quoting or paraphrasing and summary to avoid plagiarism. When attempting to present someone's ideas in our own words, you may have a hard time changing everything. Weaving a short quotation into the paraphrase or summary might help you convey the meaning more accurately.

The Basics of Directly Quoting

1. All quoted material should be enclosed in quotations marks to set it off from the rest of the text. The exception to this is block quotes, which require different formatting.
2. Quoted material should be an accurate word-for-word reproduction from the author's original text. You cannot alter any wording or any spelling. If you must do so, you must use a bracket or an ellipsis (see

number 2 in the section below).

3. Quotations should be smoothly integrated into your text, using a signal phrase or attribution tag and/or a combination of quoting and paraphrasing or quoting and summarizing.

4. A parenthetical citation should follow each quotation or, if a quote appears in the context of a paraphrase or summary, you place the citation at the end of the paraphrase or summary.

The Hard Part of Directly Quoting: Integrating Quotes into Your Writing

If your professor says you have a dumped or dropped quote or a quote bomb, you have not successfully integrated the quote into your writing. A dumped or dropped quote or a quote bomb occurs when you present a complete sentence from a source in your paper, between two other complete sentences. The quote is simply "dumped." Here is an example:

Dumped: Even before the pandemic, many Americans suffered from loneliness. Although many of us interact with people throughout our day, we can feel lonely if those interactions are only with strangers or acquaintances. "One recent study found that the average American had only two close friends in whom they would confide on important matters, down from an average of three in 1985" (Mintz). Without friends, people are more likely to feel lonely.

Integrated: Even before the pandemic, many Americans suffered from loneliness. Although many of us interact with people throughout our day, we can feel lonely if those interactions are only with strangers or acquaintances. Friendships counter our feelings of loneliness, which is why we should be troubled by a recent study showing that "the average American had only two close friends in whom they could confide on important matters, down an average of three in 1985" (Mintz). People are more likely to feel lonely if they don't engage with friends, and according to this study, some Americans might have only one or even no close friends.

Can you see how much clearer the passage is when the quote is integrated effectively? Effectively integrated quotations put you in control of the paper, and that is what a reader wants to see: your ideas and the way that you engage sources to shape and discuss your ideas. Here are guidelines to ensure you're integrating quotations effectively:

1. You, as the author of your essay, should *explain the significance of each quotation to your reader*. This goes far beyond simply including a signal phrase. Explaining the significance means indicating how the quoted material supports the point you are making in that paragraph. Remember: just because you add a quote does not mean that you have made your point. Quotes never speak for themselves. How and why does that quoted material make the point you think it does? Here are some helpful phrases for explaining quoted materials. "X" is the author's last name

- ▪ (quoted material). What X's point demonstrates is that . . .
- ▪ (quoted material). Here, X is not simply stating _____, she is also demonstrating _____.
- ▪ (quoted material). This is an example of _____ because _____.
- ▪ (quoted material). This statement clearly shows _____ because _____.

2. Sometimes, to smoothly integrate quoted material into your paper, you may need to remove a word or add a word to make the quote make sense. If you make any change to quoted material, it must be formatted correctly using an ellipsis or brackets.
   1. Use *brackets* [these are brackets] to change a word. But don't change the author's intended meaning.
   2. Use an *ellipsis* (this is an ellipsis…) to indicate omissions. But don't change the author's intended meaning.
3. Your thinking and your voice should usually begin each paragraph, precede each quote, follow each quote, and end each paragraph. In other words, your voice and your thinking should be the cement that holds together the information in your paragraphs.

Paraphrasing

Like a quote, a paraphrase presents information from a source, but instead of presenting the exact words the source uses, you translate the information into your own voice. The goal of a paraphrase is to make the original text more easily understandable in the context of your essay and to cast it in a slightly different light, so that the passage fits in with your own paper's argument. A paraphrase usually reproduces the original author's idea in *roughly the same number of words as the original, and fits it in seamlessly with your own text.*

Students often wonder why they would not simply quote if they wanted to convey all of the ideas in the original. After all, a quotation is easier to write (you just copy it from the text), and students might feel as if they couldn't possibly express the information more effectively in their own words. Paraphrasing, though, is important for two reasons:

- When you paraphrase, you actually have to understand what you read; understanding what you read makes it much more likely that you will use the source material effectively.
- When you paraphrase, you put the idea into your own "voice," thereby making your essay more unified and coherent. Just as everyone has his or her own speaking voice, everyone has his or her own writing voice.

For these reasons, you should choose to paraphrase instead of quote, unless the writing is especially distinctive

and interesting and/or is something you are going to interpret for the readers. In those instances, it's better to quote.

The important things to remember are

1. You paraphrase by using your own sentence structures, phrases, and words
2. A paraphrase does not change the author's meaning or intent
3. You must cite paraphrases accurately, with an in-text citation

Consider the attempt to paraphrase this passage:

Text:

"[C]hronological consistency of cultural artifacts, including language, cannot really be seen as a defining feature of the Tolkienian narrative, however much the author seems to have wanted to make it so — after the fact. As T.A. Shippey has pointed out, the Shire is Edwardian England, with postal service, pipes after dinner, teatime and 'weskits'" (Straubhaar 110).

Paraphrase Attempt:

Although Tolkien believed that it was very important to link his antique world of Middle Earth to real languages and cultures, this connection is not always an accurate one in terms of time. As T.A. Shippey has noted, there are many examples of the cozy rituals of everyday life in Edwardian England (smoking a pipe after a meal, tea, mail delivery, wearing of vests) in the life of the Shire (Straubhaar 110).

The attempt works because it presents the same information as the original but uses different sentence structures and words. In other words, the paraphrase is not plagiarizing because it is not replicating the words, phrases, and clauses that appear in the original.

Points to Consider When Paraphrasing

1. Paraphrases describe specific information from a source (a sentence or several sentences) in your own words.
2. Paraphrases are like translations of an author' original idea. You retain the detail of the original thought, but you express it in your own way.
3. Paraphrases of the text should be expressed in your own words, with your own sentence structures, in your own way. You should not simply "word swap," that is, replace a few words from the original with synonyms.
4. If you must use a few of the author's words (three or more in a row) within your paraphrase, they must have quotation marks around them.
5. Paraphrases often include attributive tags or signal phrases to let your readers know where the paraphrased material begins.
6. Paraphrases should be followed by parenthetical citations.

7. As with a quote, you need to explain to your reader why the paraphrased material is significant to the point you are making in your paper.

Summarizing

When you are using sources in an essay, you may want to condense the gist of a long passage into a sentence or two, in which case, you would summarize: present the information in your own voice and cite it. Summarizing is a particularly important skill for science writers, who often refer to others' research in only a sentence or two. Summarizing is also a necessary skill for those who are writing a review of literature or an annotated bibliography. All of us use summaries at some point when we write, incorporating other people's ideas or findings into our own papers to support our arguments. As with paraphrases,

1. You summarize by using your own sentence structures, phrases, and words
2. A summary does not change the author's meaning or intent
3. You must cite the summary accurately, with an in-text citation.

The difference between a summary and a paraphrase is simple: summaries convey the gist of a long passage whereas paraphrases attempt to capture all of the points in a passage. So, let's look at our original example again and see how different a summary would be from a paraphrase.

Text:

"[C]hronological consistency of cultural artifacts, including language, cannot really be seen as a defining feature of the Tolkienian narrative, however much the author seems to have wanted to make it so — after the fact. As T.A. Shippey has pointed out, the Shire is Edwardian England, with postal service, pipes after dinner, teatime and 'weskits'" (Straubhaar 110).

Summary:

Despite his intent, Tolkien's work contains anachronisms, so even in Middle Earth his characters live like Edwardian Englishmen" (Straubhaar 110).

The summary works because it presents the main point of the longer passage without borrowing any of the phrases from the original text. The summary is also cited.

Points to Consider When Summarizing

1. Summaries describe general ideas from a source. You do not express detailed information as you would with a paraphrase.
2. Summaries are shorter than the original text.
3. A signal phrase should let your readers know where the summarized material begins.
4. Summaries must be cited with an in-text citation.

5. Readers won't usually know whether you're paraphrasing or summarizing, and you may combine paraphrases and summaries, or summaries and quotations. The point is that you must cite the information, even if it's in your own words and even if you condense the original passage significantly.

How to Paraphrase and Summarize

The first step toward putting another person's ideas into your own voice is to make sure you understand what you're reading or hearing. If you have trouble understanding a source, you probably shouldn't use that source, even if you think it's going to help you support your argument. In high school, many students are able to pull quotations from different sources without really reading the sources. In college, that's not likely to work. You have to spend time studying the sources you want to use in a paper; otherwise, you're likely to misquote or to paraphrase and summarize poorly.

When you understand a source and want to use information from the source in your paper, begin by asking whether the information should be quoted. If the information isn't distinctive or compelling, and if you're not interpreting the author's words, you should paraphrase or summarize. To paraphrase or summarize, read the passage; then, look away and try to write from memory what the passage said. In most cases, you'll have the start of a good paraphrase or summary, but don't stop there. Make sure you've changed the original wording significantly by comparing your paraphrase or summary to the original. If the sentence structure is the same as the original, you're probably not putting the ideas in your own voice. Similarly, if you're using a lot of the same words from the original, you're probably not paraphrasing or summarizing. You can revise the initial attempt to paraphrase or summarize by using different sentence structures, combining sentences, using synonyms, and quoting phrases of three or more words in a row.

Next, check for accuracy. Make sure that no one reading your paraphrase or summary would get the wrong idea about what the source says. Your paraphrases and summaries shouldn't include any additional information, including examples, nor should they overstate anything that the source says. A good paraphrase or summary needs to present the original idea accurately, fairly, and objectively.

Finally, make sure you've used signal phrases and have included in-text citations for all paraphrases and summaries. Any information that you learned from studying the sources should be cited with in-text citations, and because you are expected to learn a lot from studying sources, you're most likely going to have a lot of citations in a research essay. Your readers should always be able to tell when you're referencing a source (as opposed to presenting your own thinking) and which source you're referencing.

Recognizing Good and Bad Paraphrasing and Summarizing

Below are some examples to help you understand some of the problems that occur when paraphrasing and

summarizing. Whether paraphrasing or summarizing or combining paraphrase and summary, several mistakes can occur because it's never easy to put someone's ideas into your own words. Readers won't know whether you're paraphrasing or summarizing when you put something into your own voice, but they will assume the sentence structure and word choices are your own, unless you put quotation marks around certain passages. Readers will also expect you to identify the source of the information, whether it's quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. Study the passages and each version of a paraphrase/summary to learn how to avoid the serious mistakes students often make when using sources in an essay.

The Passage as It Appears in the Source:

Critical care nurses function in a hierarchy of roles. In this open heart surgery unit, the nurse manager hires and fires the nursing personnel. The nurse manager does not directly care for patients but follows the progress of unusual or long-term patients. On each shift a nurse assumes the role of resource nurse. This person oversees the hour-by-hour functioning of the unit as a whole, such as considering expected admissions and discharges of patients, ascertaining that beds are available for patients in the operating room, and covering sick calls. Resource nurses also take a patient assignment. They are the most experienced of all the staff nurses. The nurse clinician has a separate job description and provides for quality of care by orienting new staff, developing unit policies, and providing direct support where needed, such as assisting in emergency situations. The clinical nurse specialist in this unit is mostly involved with formal teaching in orienting new staff. The nurse manager, nurse clinician, and clinical nurse specialist are the designated experts. They do not take patient assignments. The resource nurse is seen as both a caregiver and a resource to other caregivers. . . . Staff nurses have a hierarchy of seniority. . . . Staff nurses are assigned to patients to provide all their nursing care (Chase 156).

Word-for-Word Plagiarism

Critical care nurses have a hierarchy of roles. The nurse manager hires and fires nurses. S/he does not directly care for patients but does follow unusual or long-term cases. On each shift a resource nurse attends to the functioning of the unit as a whole, such as making sure beds are available in the operating room, and also has a patient assignment. The nurse clinician orients new staff, develops policies, and provides support where needed. The clinical nurse specialist also orients new staff, mostly by formal teaching. The nurse manager, nurse clinician, and clinical nurse specialist, as the designated experts, do not take patient assignments. The resource nurse is not only a caregiver but a resource to the other caregivers. Within the staff nurses there is also a hierarchy of seniority. Their job is to give assigned patients all their nursing care (Chase 156).

Why this is plagiarism

Notice that the writer has not only "borrowed" Chase's material (the results of her research) with no acknowledgment, but has also largely maintained the author's method of expression and sentence structure. The underlined phrases are directly copied from the source or changed only slightly in form.

Even though the student-writer acknowledged Chase as the source of the content, the language of the

passage would be considered plagiarized because no quotation marks indicate the phrases that come directly from Chase. And if quotation marks did appear around all these phrases, this paragraph would be so cluttered that it would be unreadable.

A Patchwork Paraphrase

Chase describes how nurses in a critical care unit <u>function in a hierarchy</u> that places <u>designated experts</u> at the top and the least senior staff nurses at the bottom. The experts — the nurse manager, nurse clinician, and clinical nurse specialist — are not involved directly in patient care. The staff nurses, in contrast, <u>are assigned to patients and provide all their nursing care</u>. Within the staff nurses is a <u>hierarchy of seniority</u> in which the most senior can become resource nurses: they are assigned a patient but also serve as a <u>resource to other caregivers.</u> The experts have administrative and teaching tasks such as selecting and <u>orienting new staff, developing unit policies,</u> and giving <u>hands-on support where needed </u>(Chase 156).

Why this is plagiarism

This paraphrase is a patchwork composed of pieces in the original author's language (underlined) and pieces in the student-writer's words, all rearranged into a new pattern, but with none of the borrowed pieces in quotation marks. Thus, even though the writer acknowledges the source of the material, the underlined phrases are falsely presented as the student's own.

A Legitimate Paraphrase

In her study of the roles of nurses in a critical care unit, Chase also found a hierarchy that distinguished the roles of experts and others. The experts in this unit do not directly attend to patients. That is the role of the staff nurses, who have a "hierarchy of seniority." The roles of the experts include employing unit nurses and overseeing the care of special patients, teaching and otherwise integrating new personnel into the unit (such as clinical nurse specialists and nurse clinicians), and policy-making (nurse clinicians). The resource nurse is a staff nurse with more experience than the others, who assumes direct care of patients as the other staff nurses do, but also takes on tasks to ensure the smooth operation of the entire facility (Chase 156).

Why this is a good paraphrase

The writer has documented Chase's material and has used quotation marks around language taken directly from the source. Notice, too, that the writer has modified Chase's language and structure and has added material to fit the new context and purpose — to present the distinctive functions of experts and non-experts in several professions.

Shared Language

Perhaps you've noticed that a number of phrases from the original passage appear in the legitimate paraphrase: critical care, staff nurses, nurse manager, clinical nurse specialist, nurse clinician, resource nurse.

If all these phrases were underlined, the paraphrase would look much like the "patchwork" example. The difference is that these phrases are all precise, economical, and conventional designations that are part of the shared language within the nursing discipline (in the too-close paraphrases, they're underlined only when used within a longer borrowed phrase).

In every discipline and in certain genres (such as the empirical research report), some phrases are so specialized or conventional that you can't paraphrase them except by wordy and awkward circumlocutions that would be less familiar (and thus less readable) to the audience. When you repeat such phrases, you're not stealing the unique phrasing of an individual writer but using a common vocabulary shared by a community of scholars.

You may also use certain words from the original when paraphrasing. In a passage about college students, for example, you wouldn't need to find a synonym to replace college students. Similarly, if you were paraphrasing or summarizing a passage about the benefits of running, you could use the words benefit and running. The key is to change the sentence structure of the original so that the passage is in your own voice.

Paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting effectively, accurately, and without plagiarizing takes a lot of time and effort, so when you're asked to incorporate information from a source into your writing, make sure you take the time to do it well.

Key Takeaways

- Quotations are not the only way to include information from sources into your essays; you can also paraphrase and summarize specific passages from your sources.
- Paraphrases and summaries must be cited with an in-text citation
- Even with a citation, a passage may be plagiarized if it includes phrases from the original without quotation marks around them. You must use your own sentence structures and word choices when paraphrasing and summarizing.