Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing

This handout is intended to help you become more comfortable with the uses of and distinctions among quotations, paraphrases, and summaries. This handout compares and contrasts the three terms, gives some pointers, and includes a short excerpt that you can use to practice these skills.

What are the differences among quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing?

These three ways of incorporating other writers' work into your own writing differ according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing.

**Quotations** must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author.

**Paraphrasing** involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly.

**Summarizing** involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.

Why use quotations, paraphrases, and summaries?

Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries serve many purposes. You might use them to . . .

- 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
- Distance yourself from the original by quoting it in order to cue readers that the words are not your own
- Expand the breadth or depth of your writing

Writers frequently intertwine summaries, paraphrases, and quotations. As part of a summary of an article, a chapter, or a book, a writer might include paraphrases of various key points blended with quotations of striking or suggestive phrases as in the following example:

In his famous and influential work On the Interpretation of Dreams, Sigmund Freud argues that dreams are the "royal road to the unconscious" (page #), expressing in coded imagery the dreamer's unfulfilled wishes through a process known as the "dream work" (page #). According to Freud, actual but unacceptable desires are censored internally and subjected to coding through layers of condensation and displacement before emerging in a kind of rebus puzzle in the dream itself (page #s).

How to use quotations, paraphrases, and summaries

Practice summarizing the following essay, using paraphrases and quotations as you go. It might
be helpful to follow these steps:

● Read the entire text, noting the key points and main ideas.
● Summarize in your own words what the single main idea of the essay is.
● Paraphrase important supporting points that come up in the essay.
● Consider any words, phrases, or brief passages that you believe should be quoted directly.

There are several ways to integrate quotations into your text. Often, a short quotation works well when integrated into a sentence. Longer quotations can stand alone. Remember that quoting should be done only sparingly; be sure that you have a good reason to include a direct quotation when you decide to do so.

Rules for Quoting

Inserting quotes:

Think of a quote like a sandwich. The actual quotation is the meat, but for it to be a sandwich it needs bread on both sides, which is your own writing.

First, you need to introduce your quotation. This can be who said it, where it came from, or additional information regarding the quotation. This is your first piece of bread.

In *The Giver*, Lois Lowery writes, “No doors in the community were locked, ever” (73).

However, you need one more piece of bread to complete a sandwich. This is your explanation or further information. Here, you explain how the quote is relevant to the greater topic in the paragraph or you give additional information regarding the quote.

In *The Giver*, Lois Lowery writes, “No doors in the community were locked, ever” (73). The feeling of false security that the people in Jonas’s world experience contributes to the boy’s desire to escape.

Punctuation:

At the end of a quotation, the punctuation goes after your in-text citation.

Quotation marks and exclamation marks go inside if the person you are writing about is asking or exclaiming. If you are asking or exclaiming, the marks go outside.

In The Giver, Lois Lowery writes, “No doors in the community were locked, ever” (73). “Have you read *The Giver*?” she asked.

Did he call her “lovely”?
Paraphrase: Write it in Your Own Words
Paraphrasing is one way to use a text in your own writing without directly quoting source material. Anytime you are taking information from a source that is not your own, you need to specify where you got that information.

A paraphrase is...

● Your own rendition of essential information and ideas expressed by someone else, presented in a new form.
● One legitimate way (when accompanied by accurate documentation) to borrow from a source.
● A more detailed restatement than a summary, which focuses concisely on a single main idea.

Paraphrasing is a valuable skill because...

● It is better than quoting information from an undistinguished passage.
● It helps you control the temptation to quote too much.
● The mental process required for successful paraphrasing helps you to grasp the full meaning of the original.

6 Steps to Effective Paraphrasing
Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning.

Set the original aside, and write your paraphrase on a note card.

Jot down a few words below your paraphrase to remind you later how you envision using this material. At the top of the note card, write a key word or phrase to indicate the subject of your paraphrase.

Check your rendition with the original to make sure that your version accurately expresses all the essential information in a new form.

Use quotation marks to identify any unique term or phraseology you have borrowed exactly from the source.

Record the source (including the page) on your note card so that you can credit it easily if you decide to incorporate the material into your paper.

Some examples to compare

The original passage:
Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes. Lester, James D. Writing Research Papers. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.
A legitimate paraphrase:
In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester 46-47).

An acceptable summary:
Students should take just a few notes in direct quotation from sources to help minimize the amount of quoted material in a research paper (Lester 46-47).

A plagiarized version:
Students often use too many direct quotations when they take notes, resulting in too many of them in the final research paper. In fact, probably only about 10% of the final copy should consist of directly quoted material. So it is important to limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes.

(This information was obtained from the OWL at Purdue, http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/02/)
Quotations

Using the words of others can be tricky business. You typically only want to use a direct quotation in the following situations: if you’re using that statement as a piece of evidence for your own argument, if you’re establishing another’s position, or if another person has said something better and more clearly than you can.

The main problem with using quotations happens when writers assume that the meaning of the quotation is obvious. Writers who make this mistake believe that their job is done when they’ve chosen a quotation and inserted it into their text. Quotations need to be taken from their original context and integrated fully into their new textual surroundings. Every quotation needs to have your own words appear in the same sentence. Here are some easy to use templates* for doing this type of introduction:

Templates for Introducing Quotations

X states, “__________.”

As the world-famous scholar X explains it, “______.”

As claimed by X, “______.”

In her article _______, X suggests that “______.”

In X’s perspective, “__________.”

X concurs when she notes, “______.”

You may have noticed that when the word “that” is used, the comma frequently becomes unnecessary. This is because the word “that” integrates the quotation with the main clause of your sentence (instead of creating an independent and dependent clause).

Now that you’ve successfully used the quotation in your sentence, it’s time to explain what that quotations means—either in a general sense or in the context of your argument. Here are some templates for explaining quotations:

Templates for Explaining Quotations

In other words, X asserts __________.

In arguing this claim, X argues that __________.

X is insisting that __________.

What X really means is that __________.
The basis of X’s argument is that __________.

*These templates are derived from Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's "They Say/I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing, second edition