

Plagiarism

Avoiding Plagiarism

Drawing on the ideas of other as you develop your own is an essential and exciting component of intellectual work. Whenever you use other writers' ideas, however, you must acknowledge your sources. Doing so allows you to distinguish between your ideas and those of others; it directs your readers to relevant sources; and it allows you to give credit where credit is due. This handout answers questions students often have concerning correct and effective use of sources

Provide citation whenever you use:

- Direct quotations
- Paraphrases and summaries
- Borrowed ideas
- Facts that are not common knowledge

Quotations

Use **quotation marks** and a **citation** when you use another writer's exact words ***even when using only a short phrase***. You must make clear to the reader which words are your own and which are another writer's. For direct quotations, citations alone are NOT sufficient; you must enclose the quoted material in quotation marks. When used judiciously, quotations serve a number of important functions in a well-crafted paper.

Select quotations that

- Develop a step in your argument
- Present striking, memorable phrasing
- Provide a strong, specific example
- Introduce a claim open to interpretation
- Summarize an author's main points

When selecting quotations, avoid

- Quoting details
- Padding a thin argument with unnecessary quotations
- Quoting commonly known information, e.g. "The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941."
- Quoting information that you could state in your own words

Paraphrases

Paraphrasing is the rewriting of an author's idea in your own words. Paraphrases rather than quote when you want to present an author's idea but the exact language is not significant. When you paraphrase, ***you must cite the source***. You must also ***fully rewrite*** the original language and original sentence structure. A common mistake is partial paraphrasing. Do not keep the author's exact wording or the same sentence structure. If you retain even a *short phrase* or a *distinctive work*, ***use quotation marks***.

Incorrect and correct examples of paraphrasing:

Original text

Descartes introduces the possibility that the world is controlled by a malicious demon who has employed all his energies to deceive him (Lu 24).

Incorrect paraphrase

Descartes suggests that the world is controlled by an evil demon who may be using his energies to deceive (Lu 24).

Comment: Plagiarism: even though the citation is provided, the sentence still has exact wording.

Correct paraphrase

Descartes suggests that the evil who rules the world may be attempting to mislead him (Lu 24)

Comment: Not plagiarism: the language is fully rewritten, and a citation is provided.

Combination of paraphrase and quotation

Descartes suggests that the evil power who rules the world may be using “all his energies to deceive him” (Lu 24)

Comment: Not plagiarism: the paraphrased portion is fully rewritten, the exact language is quoted, and a citation is provided.

When paraphrasing, you must **rewrite** the original language, **change** the original sentence structure, and **cite** the source according to the expectations of the discipline.

Borrowed Ideas

Acknowledge sources from which you borrow ideas even when you don't directly quote the text.

Borrowed ideas come in many forms, including original concepts, observations, data, and logic. Include a citation when you use

- Another author's **tables, maps, or graphs**
- Another author's **data**, even if using the data for a different argument
- The **organization or logic** of another author's argument

These guidelines include the use of reference materials such as encyclopedias and study aids, e.g. *Spark Notes*.

Common Knowledge

You do not need to cite an idea that is standard information of the discipline, such as material discussed in class or general information your reader knows or can locate easily (e.g. momentum equals mass times velocity, or Daniel Moi became president of Kenya in 1978). Such information is widely available and not disputed.

You do need to cite a fact that is not common knowledge, e.g. “Moi's election came after a heated succession struggle that allegedly included an assassination plot against Moi himself” (Karimi and Ochieng 1980: 109).

Beware of **over-citing**, which is usually the result of unnecessary citing of general knowledge or excessive reliance on source material.

Remember to check with your instructor if you are unsure whether to cite information.

Integrating Source Material

When introducing source material, avoid using a weak lead-in verb, e.g. “the author says”; instead select a very that conveys the author’s attitude toward the material, e.g., “the author *questions*.” Aim to integrate source material into your own argument; explain to your reader *how* the source material contributes to your analysis. Be sure to smoothly integrate the quotation into the surrounding language, matching the syntax of the quotation to the syntax of the surrounding statement.

Strategies for integrating source material:

- Use a full independent clause of your own to introduce the source material: e.g. Morrow views personal ads as an art form: “The personal ad is like a haiku of self-celebration, a brief solo played on one’s own horn.” (Note that the colon is the correct internal punctuation here).
- Weave quoted text into the logic of your sentence: e.g., The author suggests using “a pricing mechanism that reflects the full social cost,” which may be a viable, long term solution to resource depletion (Simon 1997: 54).

After you have presented the quotation or paraphrase, tie it to your argument. Explain to your reader **why** the idea is significant in the context of your ideas.

Develop Good Habits

Plagiarism often starts in the note-taking stage. As you take notes, distinguish between paraphrases and direct quotations. Copy quotations exactly as they appear, and record all the information you will need for citations and a list of references. To avoid confusion, some writers use only direct quotations when taking notes. If using an online source, do not cut and paste text directly into your own draft. Be conscientious and consistent in whatever note-taking strategy you use.

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