

There is More to Using Research Than Quoting

Why We Paraphrase

So, your instructor wants your essay to have research to support your thesis. If your essay can only have quotes that take up 10% to 15% of the essay (according to Purdue's Online Writing Lab and Ballenger's *The Curious Researcher*), then paraphrasing and summarizing are essential tools for using research in an essay.

How to Paraphrase

1. Select a passage from your article, book, or what-have-you, and reread it until you understand its content.
2. Rewrite the passage using your words. Your paraphrase may have a slightly different emphasis than the original depending on the focus of your essay.
3. Check your version with the original. Did you leave out any essential information?
4. Use quotation marks for phrases borrowed from the original. Avoid using the same words or phrases from the original passage. By doing this, you are avoiding plagiarism: using someone else's words without quotes.
5. Credit the paraphrase with an in-text citation or signal phrase. A signal phrase is used at the beginning of a sentence to state the name of the author. Example: According to Zboralski (← signal phrase), "it is important to know how to paraphrase your sources."

Now that you know how to paraphrase, summary should be a piece of cake. Summary is similar to paraphrasing in that it involves restating ideas in the source; however, **you only state the main idea or ideas** of your selected passage or paragraph when summarizing.

How to Summarize

1. Select a passage from your article, book, or what-have-you, and reread it until you understand its content.
2. State the main idea or ideas present. Focus on the overall goal or idea(s) in your source.
3. Remember that summaries are much shorter than paraphrases. A one sentence summary would be appropriate for one paragraph. See the examples below.

Some examples of paraphrase and summary 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.

-From the Purdue OWL, <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/02/>

From *The Mighty Pen Workshop*, April 2010: "Using Sources: Paraphrasing and Summarizing." Rock Creek Writing Center, PCC