

QUOTING, SUMMARISING, AND PARAPHRASING

Summarising and paraphrasing require important thinking and writing skills that are crucial to success at university. Paraphrasing and summarising allow you to demonstrate your understanding and interpretation of a text, and are powerful tools for reshaping information to suit the many writing tasks that will be required of you.

Much of the work you do at university will involve the important ideas, writings and discoveries of experts in your field of study. The work of other writers can provide you with information, evidence and ideas, but must be incorporated into your work carefully and **with proper documentation**.

In your assignments, markers expect more than copied (plagiarised) passages from books and journals. They expect you to demonstrate an understanding of the major ideas/concepts in the discipline. Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarising are all different ways of including the work of others in your assignments.

QUOTATIONS:

A quotation is an exact reproduction of spoken or written words. Direct quotes can provide strong evidence, act as an authoritative voice, or support a writer's statements.

How to do it: Make sure that you have a good reason to use a direct quotation. Quoting should be done sparingly and should support your own work, not replace it. For example, make a point in your own words, and then support it with an authoritative quotation.

- Every direct quotation should appear between quotation marks (“ ”).
- A short quotation often works well integrated into a sentence.
- Longer quotations (more than three lines of text) should start on a new line, and should be indented.

When to quote:

- when the author's words convey a powerful meaning
- when you want to use the author as an authoritative voice in your own writing
- when you introduce an author's position that you wish to discuss
- when you want to support claims in, or provide evidence for, your writing

SUMMARIES:

A summary is an overview of a text. The main idea is given, but details, examples, and formalities are left out. Used with longer texts, the main aim of summarising is to reduce or condense a text to its most important ideas. Summarising is a useful skill for making notes from readings and lectures, writing abstracts/synopses, and incorporating material in assignments.

How to do it: The amount of detail you include in a summary will vary according to the length of the original text, how much information you need, and how selective you are.

- Start by reading a short text and highlighting the main points as you read
- Re-read the text and make notes of the main points, leaving out examples, evidence, etc.
- Without the text, rewrite your notes in your own words; restate the main idea at the beginning, plus all major points.

When to summarise: Summarise long sections of work, like a long paragraph, page, article, or chapter.

- To outline the main points of someone else's work in your own words, without details or examples
- To include an author's ideas using fewer words than the original text
- To briefly give examples of several differing points of view on a topic
- To support claims in, or provide evidence for, your writing

PARAPHRASING:

Paraphrasing is a way of presenting a text, keeping the same meaning, but using different words. Paraphrasing is used with short sections of text, such as phrases and sentences. A paraphrase may result in a longer, rather than a shorter, version of the original text. It offers an alternative to using direct quotations and helps students to integrate evidence/source material into assignments. Paraphrasing is also a useful skill for making notes from readings and lectures, and helps explain information contained in tables, charts, and diagrams. **Even when paraphrasing, you must give credit to the original author.**

How to do it:

- Start by reading a short text and highlighting the main points as you read.
- Rewrite each main point, sentence by sentence, using synonyms (words or expressions which have a similar meaning) where possible.
- If you use any unique or specialist phrases, use quotation marks—but sparingly!

When to paraphrase:

- To use as an alternative to a direct quotation
- To re-write someone else's ideas without changing the meaning
- To express someone else's ideas in your own words
- To support claims in, or provide evidence for, your writing

References

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