



RES 3: Quoting, Paraphrasing, Summarizing

Overview

Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing are tools writers can use to incorporate sources into their own writing. Learning when and how to utilize each of these skills is key to producing polished, professional research projects. Though the exact specifics of incorporating outside sources can differ between disciplines, knowing some basic guidelines can help.

Quoting

Quoting occurs when you incorporate part of another person's writing or speech word for word. They are set off by quotation marks. However, be careful not to "pluck" and "plop" the original source into your work. Instead, consider introducing your quote with a leading phrase and make sure you note where the information comes from.

Example: Stephen King (2000) advises, "You can read anywhere, almost, but when it comes to writing, library carrels, park benches, and rented flats should be courts of last resort" (155).

When to quote: Quotes should be used sparingly in writing since too many quotes can bog down the reader. However, a carefully-placed quote can be used to demonstrate specific details about a source that might be lost in a paraphrase.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing occurs when you incorporate an idea from another person's writing or speech, but instead of using the exact wording of the author, you write the idea in your own way. A paraphrase uses approximately the same amount of words as the original text. Even though you are not directly quoting, you should still cite where the information comes from.

Example: Stephen King (2000) advises fellow writers that while reading can be done from anywhere, writing should occur, if possible, away from distracting places like park benches (155).

When to paraphrase: Paraphrasing should be used when you want to incorporate ideas from others but feel like your own phrasing will make the idea become better integrated into your writing. The choice between quote and paraphrase depends on the writing situation.

Summarizing

Summarizing occurs when you want to condense information and present the idea in a concise way to the reader. Like a paraphrase, a summary will be worded in your own way and must be cited. However, a summary will be much shorter in length from the original source.

Example: In the "On Writing" section of Stephen King's (2000) book, he emphasizes that good writers should be constantly reading as a way to inadvertently hone their writing craft (145-148).

When to summarize: Summarizing can be used any time you want to express a main idea of an entire text or a larger portion of a text.

Next, you will learn about best practices to avoid plagiarism and patchwriting.



Best practices: Avoiding Plagiarism and Patchwriting

Effective paraphrasing begins with your own research process. When you encounter a passage you think might be helpful, try not to copy down that passage verbatim. Instead, jot down the outline of the argument or thought and make sure to indicate the page number or location for future reference. When you're ready to incorporate that research into your paper, you can expand your notes using your own words. Once you've written and incorporated a paraphrase, remember to include a citation.

Patchwriting occurs when a writer essentially uses the original source's wording but only rearranges, adds, or deletes a few words or phrases. This is not best practice in responsibly using sources.

Original Source: "You can read anywhere, almost, but when it comes to writing, library carrels, park benches, and rented flats should be courts of last resort."

Patchwritten: Stephen King (2000) says that you can read any place, almost, but when it comes time to write, benches, library spaces, and rented flats should be a last resort (155).

The underlined portion here indicates the author's original words. As one can see, the student needs to decide whether or not to quote directly or attempt a better paraphrase.

To paraphrase responsibly:

- **Close it** (After you've read the part of the source you wish to use, close it or put it away.)
- **Compose it** (Attempt your paraphrase.)
- **Check it** (Check to ensure that your paraphrase is not only original but also still accurately captures the idea of the original source.)
- **Cite it** (Don't forget to cite the source in the citation style required.)

Visit the Writing Center for more help on your writing project! Stop by LIB 362 or visit us online at mtsu.mywconline.com to schedule an appointment.