
When to Summarize, Paraphrase, and Quote

Summarizing

Summaries are significantly shorter than the original material, and they take a broad overview of the source material as a whole. Summary must be cited with in-text citations and on your reference page.

Summarize when:

- You want to establish background or offer an overview of a topic
- You want to describe knowledge (from several sources) about a topic
- You want to determine the main ideas of a single source

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is stating an idea or passage in your own words. You must significantly change the wording, phrasing, and sentence structure (not just a few words here and there) of the source. These also must be noted with in-text citations and the reference page.

Paraphrase when:

- You want to clarify a short passage from a text
- You want to avoid overusing quotations
- You want to explain a point when exact wording isn't important
- You want to explain the main points of a passage
- You want to report numerical data or statistics (preferred in APA papers)

Quoting

Quotations are the exact words of an author, copied directly from a source, word for word. Quotations must appear with quotation marks, and they need to be cited with in-text citations and on the reference page.

Use quotations when:

- You want to add the power of an author's words to support your argument
- You want to disagree with an author's argument
- You want to highlight particularly eloquent or powerful phrases or passages
- You are comparing and contrasting specific points of view
- You want to note the important research that precedes your own

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