

Paraphrasing vs. Summarizing vs. Using Quotations

An Introduction

What does it mean when your professor asks you to “provide a summary” of a reading or to “paraphrase instead of using direct quotations” in your final assignment? Paraphrasing, summarizing, and using quotes are all ways of integrating external source material into your essay. Using any (or all!) of these methods can help you be clear and succinct in your writing, while also carefully and correctly attributing information or ideas to the author(s) of a publication.



REMEMBER! No matter which you choose, it is important to correctly attribute the material you are using to the author or authors of a publication. Be sure to use citations!

What is it?

Paraphrasing	Summarizing	Using Quotes
Paraphrasing: taking a piece of information or an idea from the source and stating it in your own words.	Summarizing: Shortening or condensing the text.	Quoting: taking specific language – even just one characteristic word or phrase – from the source.
Rewording the text to clarify the material or to "rewrit[te] the passage while retaining its meaning."	Finding the main idea or big picture.	Adding quotation marks around any words—even just a phrase or single key word—that you use from the writer’s text.
Maintaining a length similar to the original.	Restructuring the text according to your needs.	Providing a citation to show when you’re referring to something from the author’s text or their ideas.

Why?



There are a number of ways to include external sources in your writing, but the method you choose depends greatly on the writing context and your purpose for writing. **Consider This: What are you trying to do with the text? What is your goal?**

Paraphrasing	Summarizing	Using Quotes
To emphasize the aspects of the source that are relevant to your paper.	To capture the main idea of a source or sources.	To introduce specific language that you will refer back to in your essay.
To show that you understand the material.	To create a broad overview of the material.	To analyze the specific language an author uses.
To summarize the work of many authors who have investigated the same topic.	To practice being as succinct as possible in your writing.	To add variety to your text.

Getting Started:

Paraphrasing	Summarizing	Using Quotes
Step 1: Identify the main topics of the passage; there should be at least two.	Step 1: Determine the central argument or arguments being made.	Step 1: Find and organize relevant quotes.
Step 2: Consider how the main topics relate. Identify the relationship between the ideas.	Step 2: Consider how you might express those topics in fewer words.	Step 2: Research how to apply the appropriate citation format (or visit the UCI Writing Center for extra help!)
Step 3: Capture the essentials before writing it in your own words!	Step 3: Try writing the main idea with fewer words than the original.	Step 3: Copy the references used to your 'Works Cited' or 'Bibliography' pages if applicable.