



THE DOCUMENTED ESSAY

Quotation, Paraphrase, and Plagiarism

DIRECT QUOTATION

In academic writing, presenting the exact words of another writer through **quotation** is an important way to support your own ideas. Correct quotation tells your reader that you respect your sources, that you know how to distinguish between your own work and the work of others, that you will not allow your source's words to dominate your writing, and that you will not **plagiarize**—make unacknowledged use of another writer's words and ideas. **Quotation** is not a substitute for **paraphrase**: information from the text restated **in your own words**. Therefore, try to use direct quotations only for those times you judge to be essential; it is also recommended that you follow a quotation with an explanation of its relevance to your paragraph and/or an interpretation of its meaning.

Remember, whether you use the writer's exact words in quotation or through paraphrase, it is necessary to make a citation at the end of each quotation or paraphrase and to include a Works Cited list at the end of your paper. The examples below will use MLA documentation style; make sure to check with your instructor to confirm the citation and bibliographic reference style you are to use in your writing assignments.

Use of direct quotations is preferable in the following situations:

- **Important statements of information, policy, or opinion:** Whenever the exact wording of a statement is crucial to its interpretation, you should use a direct quotation.
- **Interpretation of literary works:** When a statement or opinion in your paper is based on a passage in a poem, short story, novel, or play, quote (as briefly as possible) from the passage so that the reader can see the basis for your explanation.
- **Distinctive phrasing:** If your source states some idea or opinion in a particularly forceful or original way that would be weakened by paraphrasing, you can use a direct quotation.

There are three styles of direct quotation:

1. **Separated:** In this form of direct quotation, the quoted words are **not** fully integrated into the grammatical structure of the sentence.

- Use a comma or colon before the direct quotation.
- Capitalize the first letter of the quotation.

Example: St. Paul declared, "It is better to marry than to burn."

Example: In his first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul commented on lust: "It is better to marry than to burn."

2. **Integrated:** You integrate your ideas with those of your source. In this form of direct quotation, there is no signal for the reader that separates your words from the words of your source.

- Do not use any punctuation (except for quotation marks).
- Do not capitalize the first letter of the quotation.

Example: Thoreau warned his readers to "beware of all enterprises that require new clothes."

3. **Block:** If your quotation is five or more typed lines, you must use block form.

- Indent the quotation ten spaces from the left margin.
- Do not enclose the passage in quotation marks.
- Use a colon to introduce the quotation unless the context calls for another punctuation mark or none at all.

Example:

In *Samuel Beckett's Self-referential Drama*, Shimon Levy analyzes the role of the spectator, emphasizing the audience's participation as an important ingredient of the dramatic experience:

Beckett moves between what Sartre calls "conscience positionelle" and "conscience reflechie." But because pure reflectiveness is empty, he is in constant search of something to be reflected. It is the act of performance that extricates Beckett from complete silence or empty self-reflectiveness, the latter being like two mirrors with nothing in the middle to serve as the object of reflection (7).

Note: If you are quoting a single paragraph, do not indent the first line. If you are quoting two or more paragraphs, indent the first line of each paragraph an additional three spaces. If your essay is double-spaced, double space the block quotation.

The verb you use to introduce the quotation suggests both the way the source presents the idea and the way you want to present it.

- Is the statement being asserted forcefully?
Use words such as: **argues, declares, emphasizes, or stresses**

- Is the statement being offered only as a possibility?
Use words such as: **suggests**, **proposes**, **implies**, or **infers**
- Does the statement immediately follow a previous reference?
Use words such as: **continues** or **adds**

You may also include information that shows how the quotation functions within the source, or within your own work:

Utilitarianism offers a possible answer to this question: "..."

Freud was aware that "..."

Virginia Wolf stressed the opposite view that "..."

PARAPHRASE

To paraphrase means to say something another way. When you paraphrase a source, you relate the ideas and information of your source, but the wording and organization of information are your own, not those of the source. A research paper should not consist of a long string of word-for-word quotations from sources; like any other paper, it should represent your own style and your own understanding of the subject and research material. Except in situations where direct quotation is specifically called for (see above), most information from sources should ordinarily be paraphrased.

The best way to write a smooth paraphrase is to first fully understand the content of the passage that you are paraphrasing. Then without looking at it, write its information down in your own words. When you have finished your paraphrase, you should compare it to the original for accuracy of information and any unintended borrowing of phrases and sentences. Remember that paraphrases, like direct quotations, must be cited according to a standard documentation style, most often MLA, APA, or Chicago Manual of Style guidelines.

Overuse of direct quotations:

Professor Muncie says, "The preponderance of evidence collected by investigators in recent years points to a date of no earlier than 1300 A.D. for the construction of the lowest level" (34). Professor William Price basically agrees with him: "Bricks of this type were not used in the surrounding areas until the late fourteenth century" (56). However, Robert McCall found that "the radiocarbon readings are completely out of line with the standard textbook dates: the original substructure is at least 700 years older than Muncie's earliest estimate" (78).

Paraphrase:

Authorities disagree about the dating of the pyramids. Professors Sheldon Muncie and William Price conclude, on the basis of the type of brick used and other evidence, that they "were begun no earlier than the late fourteenth century" (56). However, Robert McCall's research indicates a date earlier than 600 A.D. (78).

Note that in the paraphrase, a very brief quotation is used. When you paraphrase, you cannot conveniently borrow the direct language of your source, however brief, without using quotation marks. Note also that paraphrase can include your conclusions and perspective on the reading as in the case above that the experts “disagree.”

PLAGIARISM

If you use the author's words in a direct quotation or in a paraphrase without using quotation marks or parenthetical citations, you are plagiarizing. However, an appropriate paraphrase is not accomplished by changing a few of the author's words. Here are some examples which show the difference between paraphrasing and plagiarizing.

Original Source (from Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1, 248-249):

"No political form has hitherto been discovered that is equally favorable to the prosperity and the development of all the classes into which society is divided. These classes continue to form, as it were, so many distinct communities in the same nation; and experience has shown that it is not less dangerous to place the fate of these classes exclusively in the hands of any one of them than it is to make one people the arbiter of the destiny of another."

Plagiarism (Incorrect Paraphrase):

Hitherto no one has found a political form that supports equally the prosperity and progress of all of the different classes of society. Experience has indicated that it is just as hazardous to place the destiny of these classes in the hands of one class as to let one nation dictate the fate of another.

Why is this paraphrase considered plagiarism? In organization, the paragraph follows the source very closely—the same order of ideas and structure of sentences. More important, many of the words and phrases have been copied from the source without use of quotation marks. However, using quotation marks would make this a direct quotation and not a paraphrase. Notice that the only real differences are in word order or where synonyms are substituted for the author's words. Last, but certainly not least, by omitting reference to De Tocqueville, the writer implies that these ideas are her/his own.

Correct Paraphrase:

De Tocqueville states that no construct of government in history has been uniformly beneficial to all people in the society. He maintains that both the rich and the poor, when in control of the government, pass laws that are beneficial only to their own station in life while, often, being oppressive to other classes.

It is extremely important that you pay attention to these forms of utilizing sources. You simply cannot submit a paper to your professor (or anyone else for that matter) that is plagiarized. Not only does plagiarism defeat the purpose of the research paper, it may **result in strict academic penalties**. Professors are very likely to notice plagiarism since they may have read the source you are using and/or they will detect the differences in writing style between you and the author.