

Quoting and Paraphrasing

This material is partially taken from the U of Wisconsin-Madison's writing center.

SHOULD I QUOTE OR PARAPHRASE?

A research essay is an original text, not a summary of the research you have read. It is about your reasoning and your ideas, so most of your essay should be in your own words. It will include some research, most of it paraphrased. Only use direct quotations if you have a specific reason to do so.

In research essays, you should quote from a source

- to present a position or argument to critique or comment on
- to include especially moving or historically significant language (a famous quote)
- to present a particularly well-stated passage whose meaning would be lost or changed if paraphrased or summarized (a beautiful quote)

You should summarize or paraphrase when

- what you want from the source is the information it contains, not the specific language used to express it
- you can express in fewer words what the key point of a source is

Some fields of studies have slightly different standards. For example, it's often conventional to quote more in arts and humanities (such as literature, art or history), and to paraphrase and summarize more in social sciences or natural sciences. As you progress in your program and in your field, you will learn more about this, but for now, for your English course, we encourage you to just follow the guidelines presented here.

Exercise 1 – Quote it or paraphrase it? Identify which of the following would be best directly quoted in an essay, and which should be paraphrased. Justify your answers.

- 'Greenhouse gas, any gas that has the property of absorbing infrared radiation (net heat energy) emitted from Earth's surface and reradiating it back to Earth's surface, thus contributing to the greenhouse effect. Carbon dioxide, methane, and water vapour are the most important greenhouse gases.' (Michael E. Mann, Britannica) Highlight QUOTE or PARAPHRASE
- 'We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.' (Winston Churchill) Highlight QUOTE or PARAPHRASE
- 'We can defund the police, demilitarize the police, remove police from our schools, and invest in alternative approaches to creating safety and security for all of us.' (Black Lives Matter Canada) Highlight QUOTE or PARAPHRASE
- 'The Brexit transition period is an 11-month phase which started immediately after Brexit day. During transition the UK still follows EU rules and trade between the two is the same as before. The transition period ends on 31 December 2020 and the deadline for extending it has now passed.' (Tom Edgington, BBC News) Highlight QUOTE or PARAPHRASE

- 'WE Charity said Wednesday it is winding down its operations in Canada following months in the spotlight over the Trudeau government's controversial decision to have it manage a \$900-million student grant program.' (CBC News) Highlight QUOTE or PARAPHRASE
- 'Biden is a decayed servitor, a semi-senescent wax-works dummy hiding in his basement as part of the Democratic media's COVID-19 hysteria campaign.' (Conrad Black, The National Post) Highlight QUOTE or PARAPHRASE
- 'Vincent Willem van Gogh (30 March 1853 – 29 July 1890) was a Dutch post-impressionist painter who is among the most famous and influential figures in the history of Western art. In just over a decade, he created about 2,100 artworks, including around 860 oil paintings, most of which date from the last two years of his life.' (Wikipedia) Highlight QUOTE or PARAPHRASE
- 'Loneliness isn't the physical absence of other people — it's the sense that you're not sharing anything that matters with anyone else.' (Johann Hari) Highlight QUOTE or PARAPHRASE

HOW TO PARAPHRASE: GENERAL ADVICE

- When reading a passage, try first to understand it, rather than pausing to write down specific ideas or phrases.
- Be selective. Unless your assignment is to do a formal or "literal" paraphrase, you usually don't need to paraphrase an entire passage; instead, choose and summarize the material that helps you make a point in your paper.
- Think of what "your own words" would be if you were telling someone who's unfamiliar with your subject (your mother, your brother, a friend) what the original source said.

METHODS OF PARAPHRASING

Look away from the source then write

- Read the text you want to paraphrase several times until you feel that you understand it and can use your own words to restate it to someone else. Then, look away from the original and rewrite the text in your own words.

Take notes

- Take abbreviated notes; set the notes aside; then paraphrase from the notes a day or so later, or when you draft.

If you find that you can't do either of the above methods, this may mean that you don't understand the passage completely. It may be useful to look up some of the difficult words in a dictionary, let it rest and come back to it later, or ask a teacher or fellow student for help understanding the text. This method is not only a way to create a paraphrase, but also a way to understand a difficult text.

Exercise 2 – Identify good and bad paraphrasing

Read this passage from *The Hidden Dimension*, written in 1966 by American anthropologist Edward T. Hall (page 84):

The public zone is generally over twelve feet. That is, when we are walking around town, we will try to keep at least twelve feet between us and other people. For example, we will leave that space between us and the people walking in front.

Read the following paraphrases of the above passage. Point out strengths or weaknesses of each example.

Paraphrase #1 (highlight GOOD or BAD)

Hall identifies the “public zone” as being “generally over twelve feet” (84). He cites the example that when people are “walking around town”, they will “try to keep at least twelve feet” away from others, including “people walking in front” (84).

Paraphrase #2 (highlight GOOD or BAD)

Hall states that the “public zone” is usually more than twelve feet (84). People, while walking around the city, will stay twelve feet away from others (84). For instance, they will leave that distance between them and the people walking ahead (84).

Paraphrase #3 (highlight GOOD or BAD)

Hall observes that people in a public space instinctively adjust their proximity to others to maintain a minimum of twelve feet, a distance he refers to as the “public zone” (84).

Exercise 3 - Write a paraphrase of the following passage from *The Hidden Dimension* (page 85), by Edward T. Hall. Use one of the above methods of paraphrasing.

Of course there are many times when we cannot keep the distance of twelve feet. What the theory of social distance tells us is that we will start to notice other people who are within this radius. The closer they get, the more we become aware and ready ourselves for appropriate action.

Write your paraphrase here: