Paraphrases and Quotes

The following examples provide a basic sense of what instructors mean when they talk about paraphrasing and quoting sources. Remember always to check with your instructors about their requirements before beginning a paper.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is the act of putting information from another source in your own words. This is more than simply changing a couple of words in a sentence. One easy and effective way to paraphrase is to read the passage you are referencing, close the book or put away the article, and try to summarize the ideas yourself.

Considering the following block quote:

> Literacy is a label which covers many different skills and kinds of use. There are those who can read but not write, or are able to recognise road signs but not to read shop names; and those who can manage their literate needs quite well, but would be defeated by the lexicon and syntax of most academic books. The line is not so easy to draw between 'able to read' and 'able to understand' -- it is increasingly begin recognised that reading and writing are cognitively complex practices. In 1980, official British sources in Britain calculated that one million citizens were 'functionally literate'. Contemporary figures for the US were between 50 and 60 million.[1]

One way to paraphrase the above passage is:

> While we often think of literacy in simple terms, it is a very complex issue. Many people in both Britain and the United States are unable to read a textbook, for example, but can read road signs without difficulty.[2]

While the paraphrased passage does not use Tonkin's exact words to express an opinion about literacy, it still draws its IDEAS from her book. With this in mind you must always insert a footnote or parenthetical citation after such a passage to fully credit the source of your information.

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[1] Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 13.

[2] *Ibid.*

Quoting

Sometimes the exact words of an author are so important or well-presented that you may want to quote them directly. There are three things to remember when you do this:

- Always anchor your quote. The words of another author should not just float around in the middle of your paragraph, but must serve to support an argument you have already stated in your introduction. To that end you should always make sure that you properly introduce your quote (who wrote it, for example?) and explain the relevance of the material to your thesis.

- Quote sparingly. Ninety-nine percent of your paper should be in your own words. Quotes help your argument, but cannot substitute for your own original work.

- Always cite your source. First, words that belong to someone else must be copied exactly and enclosed in quotation marks. Second, you must tell your reader where the information comes from. Citation formats vary, so always be clear on what your instructor expects.

An example of how to follow these guidelines, using the same passage as before, would be:

Not all scholars agree that the question of literacy in the United States is a simple matter. As historian Elizabeth Tonkin argues, "[t]here are those who can read but not write, or are able to recognise road signs but not to read shop names." Rather than think of literacy in clear cut terms of a person's ability to read and write, we should recognize different degrees of ability, she suggests. After all, she asserts, "[t]he line is not so easy to draw between 'able to read' and 'able to understand'."

It is important to note that Tonkin's words are quoted EXACTLY as they appear in her book. This means that her British spelling is preserved. As before, a parenthetical or footnote citation should follow this passage to acknowledge your source of information.

Block Quotes

On occasion, quotes in scholarly works are quite long, and since double spacing is usually required, these quotes take up too much space on the printed page. To alleviate this problem, use block quotes. The guidelines for formatting a block quote are as follows:

- A block quote is separated from the rest of the text by a double-space.
- It is internally single-spaced.
- It is also indented one-half inch on the left to set it apart.
- Lastly, quotation marks are eliminated, since the indentation and single spacing clearly identify it as a quote.

There is no firm rule on when to use an indented block quote. The *Chicago Manual of Style* recommends using block quotes for 100 words (six to eight lines) or more of text. However, a common rule-of-thumb for short undergraduate papers is to use a block quote for more than four lines of text.

> After defeating Antony and Cleopatra, Octavian returned to Rome, where he received a magnificent triumph and was hailed as the savior of the republic. In a public ceremony, he close the doors of the temple of Janus, an act which symbolized the end of the civil wars and peace between Rome and the rest of the world. Later, the grateful citizens of Italy bestowed upon him the title Augustus ("Highest One"), and he has been known by this name ever since.[3]

You should also use a block quote when your quoted passage contains more than one paragraph and any quoted material that requires special formatting, such as lists and lines of poetry.

Using Ellipses

Sometime you may decide to use a direct quote but want to avoid including a lengthy passage when the essential meaning that you want to include is much shorter. To replace unnecessary words in a quoted sentence, you may use an ellipses – a series of three periods followed by the remainder of the quotation.

Consider the following quote from an African-American man remembering his experiences of the 1940s in a later interview: "I never saw the Confederate flag until I went to Montgomery, on my way by train to Tuskegee, and I saw some kids with a Confederate flag on top of the American flag."[4]

For the sake of brevity, you can eliminate the clause in the middle of the sentence. Since eliminating it will not significantly alter the meaning of the quote, you may do so using an ellipsis. George Holloway remembers, "I never saw the Confederate flag…until I saw some kids with a Confederate flag on top of the American flag."[5]

Another way to use ellipses is to shorten a longer quote that includes multiple sentences. If material you want to delete comes at the beginning of a new sentence, you still need to include the period from the last sentence, followed by the ellipsis, and then the remainder of the quote. There are therefore four periods in a row, which indicate an end of a sentence and an ellipsis.

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[3] Robert Howe and Helen Howe, *The Ancient World* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1988), 238-239.
[4] Quote in Michael Keith Honey, *Black Workers Remember: An Oral History of Segregation, Unionism and the Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 87.
[5] *Ibid.*

For example, suppose you want to cite the earlier example from Robert Howe and Helen Howe's book, *The Ancient World*, but are only interested in the relationship between Octavian's victory and his new name. You can remove this unwanted portion of the quotation using an ellipsis. In your paper, your sentence might read, "After defeating Antony and Cleopatra, Octavian returned to Rome, where he received a magnificent triumph and was hailed as the savior of the republic…the grateful citizens of Italy bestowed upon him the title of Augustus ("Highest One"), and he has been known by this name ever since."[6]

Further Tips for Quoting Smoothly

When using quotations in a paper, the quotation should become part of your sentence. Here are some tips that might help you produce this seamless effect.

Set up the quotation with a sentence of your own. End this with a colon, followed by the quotation.

> Rev. Alexander Glennie eloquently emphasized the humane aspect of Christianity in his sermons to the slaves: "You should try and remember these parts of the Bible, that you may be able 'to do your duty in that state of life, unto which it has pleased God to call you."

Precede a quotation with signal words, such as 'explains' and 'illustrates,' or 'continues' – followed by a comma. Descriptive words like these are usually more interesting than using 'says.'

> In explaining the causes of the United States' entry into World War I, Woodrow Wilson proclaimed, "We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, nor material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make."

Incorporate phrases and pieces of quotations into your own sentence.

> Many African Americans agreed with David Walker's assertion that "America is more our country than it is the whites – we have enriched it with out blood and tears."

Don't just throw in a quotation if it makes the grammar incorrect. You should not write, for instance, Gilgamesh told Siduri, after seeing her, that she should "let me not see the death which I ever dread." Instead, try one of these three options:

> Gilgamesh told Siduri, "Now that I have seen your face, let me not see death which I ever dread."

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[6] Howe and Howe, *The Ancient World*, 238-239.

Gilgamesh told Siduri, after seeing her, that she should not let him "see the death" that he feared so much.

Gilgamesh implores Siduri, after gazing at her, to help him confront his mortality: "[L]et me now see the death which I ever dread."

When you are quoting something that is already in quotation marks in the text, use single quotation marks to denote the original quotation and double quotation marks to indicate your own.

"Suppose then you said to me, 'Socrates, we shall acquit your, but only on one condition'....I should reply...'I owe a greater obedience to God than to you.'"

Remember that using proper quotation format not only adds polish and smoothness to your paper, it also guards against potential plagiarism. When in doubt as to whether or not to quote, it is always safer to use a quotation.