Make Your Sources Work for You

Direct Quote | Paraphrase | Synthesize | Summarize
Word-for-word repeat | Put the source into your own words | Paraphrase multiple sources at once (only if they all agree) | Paraphrase required
Must be exact | Allows for originality | Describe the main idea of an entire source | Easy but lazy

Paraphrase > Quotes

As much as possible, strive to convert your source information into your own words.

The purpose of your writing is to present your arguments, your ideas.

Your sources are just your back-up that lend support to your ideas (and hopefully in turn, your ideas draw from your source material -- go where your evidence takes you!).

It's like making a salad. A head of lettuce, a whole onion, and a whole tomato sitting in a bowl is not a salad - they haven't been transformed (chopped up) and integrated (stirred together).

There's no hard rule on how to create a paraphrase, because it depends on what you're trying to say. A common trick is to read the useful passage, then put it away and write out the information from memory when taking notes.

- Do NOT just mimic the same sentence structure with new synonyms swapped in!

Original: Brevity is the soul of wit. - Shakespeare

Bad: Being brief is the soul of intelligence (Shakespeare).
Better: Being succinct and to-the-point is essential to communicating intelligently (Shakespeare).

Remember! Anywhere you mention something not original to you, you must have an in-text citation and matching Works Cited entry!

https://UPresearch.LoneStar.edu/citations
If You MUST Quote...

- No standalone quotes! Use signal phrases to introduce, or follow the quote with your own words, or both.
  
  **Bad:** From the microwave to smartphones and self-driving cars, we are familiar with technology our ancestors could only dream of. "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" (Clarke).

  **Better:** It’s easy to forget that the technology we find so familiar today, from microwaves to smartphones, perhaps would have been "indistinguishable from magic" to our ancestors.

- Make sure you follow a quote with your own analysis. Don’t string together back-to-back quotes.

  **Better:** …perhaps would have been "indistinguishable from magic" to our ancestors. If we follow this same trajectory, perhaps self-driving cars will seem boring to our grandchildren, even as we continue to marvel at and even distrust them in our old age.

- Be a quote minimalist. Keep the quote as short as necessary for your writing. (Refer to the Making Quotes Fit examples below.)

- The shorter your paper, the fewer direct quotes you should have. In a paper under 5 pages in length, you should NOT have any quotes that take up 4 or more lines.

Integrating Outside Information

Signal Phrases

As Alexander Hamilton articulated in Federalist Paper number eight, blah…

Signal phrases introduce a quote or paraphrased information. They aren’t required, but they can help indicate to your reader that you’re about to drop some knowledge on them.

Making Quotes Fit

The framers of the Constitution "ordain[ed] and establish[ed]" …

The changes you make to words in a quote can stay inside the quotes so long as you use the square brackets [ ] to show where you’re not quite quoting.

The framers declared that, "We the People … do ordain and establish this Constitution." A way of minimizing the amount you’re quoting. Are there a bunch of useless words in between two bits you really want to quote? Chop it out, using the … (ellipsis) to indicate that you’ve omitted content.