OU Writing Center
The University of Oklahoma

A Guide to Quoting & Paraphrasing

In many educational and research papers, writers will need to provide supporting evidence for their claims. There are two choices: quoting the material directly or paraphrasing. When used effectively, quoting and paraphrasing external sources can provide this support and add credibility to papers' arguments. But how can you choose which to do?

By definition, these two writing techniques are done differently yet essentially serve the same purpose.

Quoting uses exact, identical words from the original source. The written segment will match word-for-word and be enclosed within quotation marks, immediately followed by an in-text citation of the source.

Paraphrasing is when the writer restates the meaning of a text without directly using the author's words. Instead, the author's meaning should be formulated in the writer's own words. When paraphrasing, both the sentence structure and the original source words should be changed to avoid plagiarism. The paraphrased material must also be attributed to the original source, immediately followed by an in-text citation.

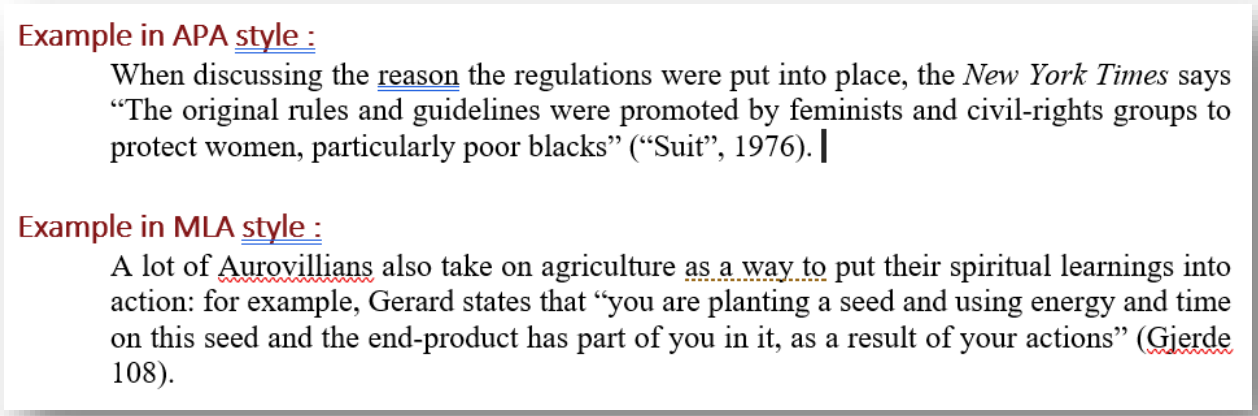
When to Quote

Quotations should be strategically used and should mainly serve to provide evidence in support of the thesis. However, overpacking the paper with quotes may insult that purpose. Writers must still organize and express the majority of the main ideas in their own words. If, suppose, an idea or evidence is so unique and only the author's words can do the text justice, then it is proper to quote. Moreover, if the quote is powerfully or eloquently written, it can help make arguments stronger. For example, if a text explains a testimonial and first-hand experience of an individual, then the text will deserve the original wording.

Different disciplines may also vary on the appropriation of quoting. For papers analyzing texts of work or analysis of other authors' wording (e.g., literature), the paper would benefit from many quotes. Contrarily, social science papers would benefit from paraphrasing and the writer's original analysis.

How to Quote: Short Quotes

For short quotations [less than 40 words], enclose the quotation within quotation marks. After the last quotation mark, provide the proper in-text citation for the citation style. Any punctations – periods, commas, semicolons, question/exclamation marks – should come after the in-text citation.



Example in APA style :

When discussing the reason the regulations were put into place, the *New York Times* says "The original rules and guidelines were promoted by feminists and civil-rights groups to protect women, particularly poor blacks" ("Suit", 1976).

Example in MLA style :

A lot of Aurovillians also take on agriculture as a way to put their spiritual learnings into action: for example, Gerard states that "you are planting a seed and using energy and time on this seed and the end-product has part of you in it, as a result of your actions" (Gjerde 108).

How to Quote: Long Quotes

For long quotations (generally, over 40 words), write the quote in a block quote format. Start the quotations on a new line and indent the entire quote one tab to the right. Maintain the double-spacing throughout the quote. At the end of the quote, place your in-text citation just as you would do for the short quotations. Note that for certain citation styles, the indication for block quotes will vary depending on the citation style. For example, APA suggests block quote formatting for quotes over 40 characters and MLA suggests it for quotations over 4 lines. Overall, utilize both direct and block quotes sparingly; they should not overwhelm the paper.

Example in MLA style:

In the case of the women who were forcibly sterilized, they were stripped away from that decision and also the promises of the government. Researcher Alex Stern wrote,

> "In the early 20th century across the country, medical superintendents, legislators, and social reformers affiliated with an emerging eugenics movement joined forces to put sterilization laws on the books. Such legislation was motivated by crude theories of human hereditary that posited the wholesale inheritance of traits associated with a panoply of feared conditions such as criminality, feeblemindedness, and sexual deviance." (Stern qtd. in Ko).

When the government was supposed to provide public health actions to protect and improve people's health, it failed to fulfill that responsibility.

When omitting or adding words in any sized quotation, indicate the newly-added and/or deleted words in brackets with an ellipses inside: […].

Example in APA style:

Throughout the story, Selzer (2006) continuously compares the criminal to one of a "great mythic beast broken loose in the city [having] raw, untreated flesh […] suggesting less a human than a great beautiful animal" (61).

When to Paraphrase

Paraphrasing source material can help demonstrate your own thoughts and voice instead of chaining together pieces of other people's words. It is a useful way to ensure you understand the meaning of an original source as well. Paraphrasing is useful when you would like to reiterate an idea expressed by a source, but do not think the specific language the author used to express it is necessary to include to understand its meaning. This way, you can ensure that the research paper will effectively integrate research and ensure your voice is heard.

Paraphrasing is preferred in some disciplines and by some citation styles over direct quoting. For example, APA style prefers paraphrasing over direct quoting. Disciplines in the Social Sciences and in the Natural Sciences also prefer paraphrasing as the primary way to incorporate and cite source material. Disciplines in the Humanities, such as English, use MLA and prefer direct quoting over paraphrasing. Always follow the assignment instructions or style conventions established by your professor.

How to Paraphrase

Unlike quoting, there is no specific format for paraphrasing other than offering an in-text citation at the end of the paraphrased material. In general, paraphrased material should feature a different sentence structure and vocabulary than the original source.

Original Passage

In *The Sopranos*, the mob is besieged as much by inner infidelity as it is by the federal government. Early in the series, the greatest threat to Tony's Family is his own biological family. One of his closest associates turns witness for the FBI, his mother colludes with his uncle to contract a hit on Tony, and his kids click through Web sites that track the federal crackdown in Tony's gangland.

Paraphrased Passage

In the first season of *The Sopranos*, Tony Soprano's mobster activities are more threatened by members of his biological family than by agents of the federal government. This familial betrayal is multi-pronged. Tony's closest friend is an FBI informant, his mother and uncle are conspiring to have him killed, and his children are surfing the internet for information about his activities.

Examples in "How to Paraphrase" above taken from: "Family Values and Feudal Codes: The Social Politics of America's Twenty-First Century Gangster." *Journal of Popular Culture* 37.4 (2004) by Ingrid Field Walker, taken from Duke University Libraries.

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