

To Paraphrase or to Quote?

Writing Centre Learning Guide

The ability to appropriately include the ideas and content from external source material is crucial in academic writing. It is also important that such writing demonstrates an understanding of the external source material and how it is relevant to your context. When considering using external sources to inform your writing, you need to consider whether the author's exact words (a direct quote) or the author's ideas in your words (a paraphrase) are the most appropriate form of citation.

Introduction

Many academic writing tasks at university involve the inclusion of external sources to add value to your work. It is tempting to quote directly from external sources to help add such value. However, overuse of direct quotes can mean that you are not necessarily demonstrating understanding of the external sources and that your own 'voice' cannot easily be heard. Thus, it is important to achieve a balance between direct quotes and paraphrases when drawing upon external sources. However, both quotations and paraphrases should be used sparingly. A paper should be a balance between the ideas of others and your own ideas.

What is paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing involves making word, sentence and grammar changes, to rewrite the ideas expressed by someone else, while at the same time being careful to keep the same original meaning. It is not enough to simply change the order of a few words or replace them with synonyms. When done well, a paraphrase is often more concise than the original.

You should paraphrase...

- to demonstrate your understanding of the ideas of the author
- to assist your readers by explaining difficult concepts or terminology
- when the original ideas are impressive but the original wording is less so
- when you want to change the emphasis of the ideas to better match your own context
- to avoid overuse of direct quotes and the consequent risk of losing your own 'voice'.

However, a paper composed mostly of paraphrases from others may also be seen as too dependent on its sources. Although each paraphrase might have been cited correctly, your own 'voice', which provides contextual analysis, is absent.

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What is quoting?

Quoting involves using the exact wording used by the original author(s) in their work; this is indicated by quotation marks. The term *direct quote* is often used to distinguish a quote from a paraphrase. You use single '...' or double "..." quotation marks depending on the style of referencing you are following.

You should quote...

- when the original wording is engaging for the reader and you feel you could not match this
- if the quote is particularly well-known
- where the exact words of an authority would lend support to your own ideas
- when you want to give the author's exact position.

Be selective in your use of quotes, they should add impact to your work, not draw attention away from it!

Note-taking

Good note-taking strategies can enhance your writing, so do not copy from a source word-for-word unless you intend to include it as a direct quote. Instead, after careful reading, write out the main ideas in your own words. Following the note-taking steps below can help you to develop the ability to evaluate the author's ideas and also decrease the risk of plagiarism.

Steps to effective paraphrasing

Read the material you want to paraphrase several times over.



Re-read the original passage until you understand its full meaning.



Take some notes of the key terminology.



Write your own paragraph looking only at your notes and not at the original source document.



Check your rewritten version against the original source.



Verify that your version is accurate and consistent with the original intent of the writer.



In all cases, make it clear where your paraphrasing begins and ends with the use of in-text citation (remember the page number!).

If you follow this strategy (and it does require some discipline) then your final paraphrase is more likely to represent your own writing style rather than just an obvious rehash of the original source. Remember also to always give a reference for all paraphrases and quotes. The example below distinguishes between successful paraphrasing/quoting and plagiarism when drawing upon the same source text.

Original source material

The International Baccalaureate® (IB) is more than its three educational programmes. At our heart we are motivated by a mission to create a better world through education. We value our hard-earned reputation for quality, for high standards and for pedagogical leadership. We achieve our goals by working with partners and by actively involving our stakeholders, particularly teachers. We promote intercultural understanding and respect, not as an alternative to a sense of cultural and national identity, but as an essential part of life in the 21st century. All of this is captured in our mission statement. The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organisation works with schools, governments and international organisations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and life-long learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

International Baccalaureate Organisation. (2009). Retrieved 24 November, 2009, from <http://www.ibo.org/>

Student notes

three educational programmes	reputation for quality & high standards
twenty-first century	work with partners e.g. teachers
promote intercultural understanding	respect cultural & national identities
develop young people	caring, knowledgeable, understanding
life-long learners	more peaceful world

An acceptable example of paraphrasing from the source text

The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO, 2009) offers three programmes, to educate young people to care about the world. The organisation states that it works with education and governmental organisations to create education programmes that encourage young people across the globe to develop intercultural understanding. To this end, the IBO integrates stakeholders, especially educators, to promote greater understanding of other cultures (IBO, 2009).

Note: the ideas are the same, yet much of the language, grammar and textual organisation is different.

An acceptable combination of paraphrasing/quoting from the source text

The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO, 2009) fosters the development of young people who are curious, well-informed and who, through growth in intercultural understanding, help develop a better world for all. To sustain such development, the IBO works with schools, governments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), creating rigorously assessed programmes helping 'students ... to become active, compassionate and life-long learners' (IBO, 2009).

Note: the quote is used as the original language has particular impact. The ellipsis (...) is used where part of the quote is left out.

A plagiarised version of the source text

The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO, 2009) is not just its three educational programmes, at its heart they want to create a better world through education. The aim of the IB is to develop knowledgeable, inquiring and caring young people helping to create a better, more peaceful world via intercultural understanding and respect.

Note: the underlined areas show the text which is taken directly from the original without acknowledgement.

Proper citation

In the first two examples above, you can see that paraphrasing is a condensed version of the original work. Hence, a paraphrased example must be referenced as you would for a word-for-word quotation. While the words may be your own, the 'ideas' are still borrowed and you must acknowledge all your sources.

Some considerations when using quotes or paraphrases

Make sure you are not just listing what other authors have to say on an issue or idea. The quote or paraphrase should be relevant to the point **you** are putting forward rather than instead of it. Your choice of reporting verb can clearly indicate your position in relation to the idea. For example:

Van de Vaart (2010, p.18) believes that	This is a neutral position
As Van de Vaart (2010, p.18) demonstrates	This is showing agreement with the author
Van de Vaart (2010, p.18) pays little heed to qualitative analysis in his dismissal of	This is critical of van de Vaart.

(For more details see the Learning Guide titled **Reporting Verbs**)

If you are using quotes, use short quotes (less than 30 words/three lines) wherever possible and integrate your quotes into your sentence. If you use a longer quote, make sure it is indented, always from the left side and sometimes from the right side too. For example:

For the purpose of this paper, 'acculturation' will refer to Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits' (1936, p.149) classical definition which says,

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.

Source: Velliariis, D. & Warner, R. (2009). Embedding 'Learning Guides' in a flexible delivery model: A pilot study to improve international students' academic acculturation at an Australian university. *Refereed proceedings of Conference Proceedings of the 20th ISANA International Education Conference*, Canberra, Australia. Retrieved from <http://proceedings.com.au/isana2009/>

Useful resources

Websites

<http://quotations.about.com/cs/quotations101/a/aa042603.htm>

http://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/learning_guides/ (See *Reporting Verbs*)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c43vCtLLLS&feature=related>

<http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm> (Click on Reporting in left menu)