

Quoting vs. Paraphrasing

Many academic writing assignments involve using and citing external sources to add value to your work by either **quoting** or **paraphrasing**. This guide will go through what each technique means and when to use which.

What is quoting?

Quoting involves using the *exact* wording used by the original author(s) in their work, indicated by quotation marks. The term **direct quote** is often used to distinguish a quote from a paraphrase.

You should quote:

- if the quote is particularly well-known
- when you want to give the author's **exact** position.
- where the exact words of an authority would lend support to your own ideas
- when the original wording is **engaging** for the reader and you feel cannot be matched
- if you are **unable** to paraphrase or summarize the source material without changing the author's intent



Key tip: Make sure to be selective in your use of direct quotes; they should add valuable support to your work, not distract from your ideas.

What is paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing involves making changes to an original passage while retaining the **original meaning** of the author's ideas. When done well, a paraphrase is often more **concise** than the original.

You should paraphrase:

- to demonstrate your **understanding** of the passage
- to avoid **overuse** of direct quotes (see notes below)
- when the **wording** of the source is less important than the **meaning** of the source
- when it is more effective to change the organization of ideas so that you can emphasize the points that are **most related** to your paper
- to assist your readers by explaining **difficult concepts** or terminology in more comprehensible terms.



Key tip: While paraphrasing is a useful and valuable technique, a paper composed mostly of paraphrases from others may also be considered too dependent on its sources because your own voice, which provides contextual analysis, is overridden by others' ideas.

How often should I quote or paraphrase?

While direct quotations can add value to your work, **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. Ideally, between 10-15 percent of your paper should be borrowed material.