

Quotation, Paraphrase, and Summary

Why do you cite?

Reasons to cite outside sources in your writing:

- Highlight and respond to contributions to the ongoing discussion surrounding your topic
- Provide evidence to support a point
- Lend credibility to your analysis, findings, argument, etc.

Quotation

When you find information that helps you support or develop your ideas about a topic, you may want to introduce your reader to this information by directly quoting a term, phrase, sentence, or longer excerpt from a source.

It can be tempting to fill your writing with the words of expert researchers and writers, but you should reserve direct quotations for those passages that are worded so uniquely or precisely that some meaning would be lost if you simply paraphrased the information (that, is, restated it in your own words). As a rule of thumb, try to limit the amount of quotation in a piece of writing to roughly 10% of the total word count.

Incorporating Quotations

Method 1: Use a signal phrase

Sometimes it works best to introduce a quotation by using a clear signal phrase—a phrase that explicitly attributes a quote to its author.

Examples:

Observing the tendency of young writers to give up on a piece of writing before it reaches its full potential, writer Natalie Goldberg declares, “[p]ush yourself beyond when you think you are done with what you have to say” (103).

As Goldberg explains, “[s]ometimes when you think you are done, it is just the edge of the beginning” (103).

Helpful verbs to use in signal phrases:

Acknowledges	Chronicles	Delineates	Highlights	Points out	Replies
Adds	Claims	Denies	Hypothesizes	Posits	Reports
Admits	Comments	Discloses	Illustrates	Purports	Responds
Advances	Compares	Discounts	Implies	Reasons	Reveals
Affirms	Concludes	Disputes	Indicates	Recounts	States
Agrees	Concurs	Documents	Insists	Refers	Submits
Alludes to	Confirms	Emphasizes	Maintains	Reflects	Suggests
Argues	Contends	Explains	Narrates	Refutes	Supports
Asserts	Contrasts	Expresses	Negates	Reiterates	Theorizes
Attests to	Declares	Extrapolates	Notes	Relates	Writes
Characterizes	Defines	Grants	Observes	Remarks	Verifies

Method 2: Embed the quotation

Another option when quoting from a source is to embed the quote into a sentence; in other words, you can structure your sentence so that it leads naturally into the quotation. If you do this, make sure that the grammatical structure of the sentence including the quotation is correct. Your wording should lead into the quotation so seamlessly that if you read your sentence aloud, it would be impossible for someone listening to determine where your wording ended and the quotation's wording began.

Examples:

Discussing the importance of specificity in writing, Natalie Goldberg maintains that we should “[g]ive things the dignity of their names” (70).

Indeed, when you write the word “‘geranium’ instead of ‘flower,’ you are penetrating more deeply into the present and being there” (Goldberg 71).

Method 3: Use a complete sentence followed by a colon

The final option for introducing a quotation is to attach the quote to a complete sentence using a colon. This method works well when you want to pair a statement with a quotation that directly exemplifies or parallels the statement.

Examples:

Goldberg urges writers to listen to their intuition and instincts: “[f]irst thoughts are the mind reflecting experiences—as close as a human being can get in words to the sunset, the birth, the bobby pin, the crocus” (68).

It can be difficult for a writer to get a clear perspective on a recent composition: “[t]he best test of a piece of writing is over time” (Goldberg 158).

Long Quotations

Prose: More than four (4) typed lines of prose is considered a long quotation. Long quotations are formatted as block quotations, where the sentences are in a block of text without any quotation marks.

- Start the quotation on a separate line, indented one inch from the left margin, but maintain the double spacing.
- Introduce the quotation with a complete sentence, followed by a colon.
- Do not use quotation marks because the block format indicates it is a quotation.
- Place the period after the final word of the quotation, rather than after the citation.
- The next line will go back to the original margin if the paragraph continues beyond the quotation.

Example:

After attending the writing center, John described his experience:

The writing tutor that I worked with was beyond helpful in the entire process. She was able to look over my paper with me and ask questions to lead me into finding better ways to write. I felt totally comfortable with her. I was surprised at how fast my appointment went and cannot wait to schedule another meeting with her next week. (Brown 42)

Ellipses and Brackets in Quotations

Ellipses

You may wish to omit one or more sections from a quotation that is very long and would take up too much space in your paper. To signal you have shortened a quote, insert ellipses where words are omitted. Use three dots (...) if you omit part of a single sentence. Use four dots (....) if your omission included one or more sentences.

When omitting sections of a quote, make sure the resulting quote makes sense, is grammatically correct, and stays true to the meaning of the original passage.

Examples:

Focus is essential to any piece of writing. Golderg reminds us that “[a] responsibility of literature is to make people awake, present, alive. If the writer wanders, then the reader, too, will wander.... there is a fine line between precision and self-indulgence” (55).

To illustrate the importance of focus, Golderg describes how a writer might be composing “a restaurant scene but become obsessed with the fly on the napkin and begin to describe...the fly’s back, the fly’s dreams, its early childhood” (55).

Brackets

In most citation styles, it is permissible to insert small bits of explanatory information into quotations through the use of brackets. Brackets can also be used to make a quotation’s capitalization or verb tense consistent with the sentence surrounding it.

Brackets used to add explanatory information:

Goldberg argues that writers can’t succeed on the basis of raw talent alone: “If you are [talented], enjoy, but it won’t take you that far. Work takes you a lot further” (184).

The original passage does not include any word between “are” and “enjoy.” Goldberg uses the word “talent” throughout the paragraph from which this quotation comes; a reader of the original paragraph would know what she means when she writes, “If you are, enjoy.” However, because the quote has now been taken out of its context, the bracketed information is added for clarity.

Brackets used to make grammar consistent:

To illustrate the dangers of losing focus, Goldberg describes how a writer composing “a restaurant scene...become[s] obsessed with the fly on the napkin and begin[s] to describe...the fly’s back, the fly’s dreams, its early childhood” (55).

Here, brackets are used to match the verb tense in the quote to the surrounding sentence.

Paraphrase

When you want to cite specific information from a source but do not care about preserving the original wording, paraphrasing is a good option. **Paraphrasing** is when you restate an idea taken from a source in your own words. Paraphrasing helps you smoothly incorporate others’ ideas into your prose and keeps the overall amount of quotation to a minimum.

Demarcating Boundaries Between Others’ Ideas and Your Own

Just like quotations, all paraphrases must be accompanied by an in-text citation crediting the original source. Because most citation styles require in-text citations to be placed at the end of a passage of sourced material, you should use your wording to signal when a paraphrase has begun. Look at the original passage below and the paraphrase of it that follows, noticing how the paraphrased passage clearly signals that the ideas contained within were pulled from an outside source.

Original Passage:

We have trouble connecting with our own confident writing voice that is inside all of us, and even when we do connect and write well, we don’t claim it. I am not saying that everyone is Shakespeare, but I am saying that everyone has a genuine voice that can express his or her life with honest dignity and detail. There seems to be a gap between the greatness we are capable of and the way we see ourselves and, therefore, see our work.
(Goldberg 154)

Acceptable Paraphrase:

Natalie Goldberg points out writers’ tendency to undervalue their own good work. Although not everyone will become a preeminent author, everyone has life experiences and a unique perspective on these experiences that can lead to strong writing (154).

Notice how the boundaries of the paraphrase are clearly demarcated at the beginning by a signal phrase—“Natalie Goldberg points out”—and at the end by a parenthetical citation—(154).

Avoiding Plagiarism When Paraphrasing

When paraphrasing, it is essential that you state the author’s ideas *in your own words*. You should capture the essence of what the author says without mimicking their wording or sentence structure. Some students think that paraphrasing means replacing every few words from the original passage with a synonym while maintaining the same basic sentence structure; this is actually a form of plagiarism called “mosaic” or “patch” writing. This type of plagiarism makes it difficult for your reader to determine which ideas and wording belong to you and which ones belong to your source. If you want to retain original wording, the best option is to quote directly from the source. Below is an unacceptable “mosaic” paraphrase of the Goldberg passage that appears on page 3.

Unacceptable/Plagiarized Paraphrase:

As Goldberg explains, we have a hard time finding our own self-assured writing style that we all have inside of us. Even when we do find it and compose beautifully, we don’t own it. She is not arguing that everyone is Shakespeare, but she is stating that each writer has an authentic style that can articulate their experiences with genuine pride and specificity. There appears to be a breach between the excellence writers are able to achieve and the way they view themselves and, as a result, view their writing (154).

Even though the above paraphrase uses correct citation to mark the boundaries of Goldberg’s ideas, it is plagiarism because it mirrors wording and sentence structure from the original passage. Someone reading this passage would not have a clear picture of which ideas and wording came from Goldberg and which ideas and wording came from the writer of the paraphrase.

Combining Quotation and Paraphrase

More often than not, citations will involve some combination of paraphrase and quotation. For example, a paraphrased idea might contain within it brief quotes from the original passage. Combining quotation with paraphrase allows you to cite other writers while retaining control over the voice of your paper. Here is yet another paraphrase of the Goldberg passage presented on page 3 of this handout, this one containing embedded quotations.

Paraphrase combined with quotation:

Natalie Goldberg points out writers' tendency to undervalue their own good work. She concedes that not everyone will become a preeminent author, but asserts that "everyone has a genuine voice that can express his or her life with honest dignity and detail" (154).

Summary

Both quotation and paraphrase involve "zooming in" on a specific part of a source. However, you may wish to briefly summarize the content of a source without pinpointing a particular passage or idea. When summarizing a source, it is not necessary to cite a specific page number, as the summary will encapsulate the entire source. Just cite the author of the source and—if it is useful for the reader to know—the title. This is enough information to direct the reader to the works cited page, which should contain entries for any sources you have quoted, paraphrased, or summarized.

Summary of *Writing Down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg

In *Writing Down the Bones*, Natalie Goldberg offers writing advice culled from years of experience writing and teaching writing. Structured in brief chapters written in an informal, conversational style, the book offers tips on everything from writing vivid details to developing confidence and owning one's abilities as a writer.

Citation Styles (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago/Turabian)

The way in which you provide attributions for quotations, paraphrases, and summaries will depend on which citation style you are using (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago/Turabian). For example, MLA format (used in the examples on this handout) requires writers to place the last name of the source's author and the page number from which the quotation or paraphrase was taken in parentheses directly after the cited material. This in-text citation will correspond with an entry on a works cited page at the end of the document. The works cited page lists all sources cited in the text with more complete publication information. For information about the requirements of specific citation styles, consult a citation guide and/or the KC Writing Studio handouts on specific citation styles.

Work Cited

Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. 2nd ed., Shambhala, 2005.