

Quoting and Paraphrasing

Essay assignments frequently require you to *use sources*, but what exactly does this entail? How do you know when to **quote** directly from a source and when to **paraphrase** an author's ideas? How can you make a source's ideas fit convincingly and grammatically into your own writing?

Integrating outside sources effectively will allow you to do justice to your claims and show how the work of others relates to the work you are doing. Whether you are paraphrasing or quoting, you must **cite** the outside source, that is, give credit to the author. In MLA style, citing is accomplished with a parenthetical, or in-text, citation immediately after the quoted or paraphrased passage *and* a Works Cited page at the close of your paper (See the Writing Centers handout "Citing in an MLA Paper")

I. When to quote and when to paraphrase

Quoting from sources can both enhance the quality of your writing and demonstrate the strength of your argument. Poor use of quotations, however, can greatly detract from your paper. Quote too often, and you seem to offer too little of your own work; quote too little, and readers may think your claims lack support or may not see how your work relates to that of others.

Quote from a source...

- *when language from the source is especially vivid or memorable.*

The Harry Potter series has been lumped by some critics into the "vast concourse of inadequate works" of literature produced in the twentieth century (Bloom 3).

- *when you have to use technical language*, or when the language is fundamental to your discipline in general or to your argument in particular.

Professor James Thomas addresses those who assume *Harry Potter* is too popular to be a classic and explains, "The elitist assumption is that something popular cannot also be good. So much detail is encoded in these books" (5).

- *when the words of an authority can lend weight to your argument.*

The prominent literary scholar Harold Bloom has leveled the following critique at J.K. Rowling: "Her prose style, heavy on cliché, makes no demands upon her readers" (2).

Note: in all of the above examples, the MLA in-text citation follows the quote, and punctuation goes outside the parentheses.

When quoting...

- Identify (name) the speaker or writer of the work you are quoting:

In *Manhood for Amateurs*, Michael Chabon remarks wryly that the "handy thing about being a father is that the historic standard is so pitifully low" (11).

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- Quote *the smallest amount of text possible*, paying attention to what is relevant to your argument. You are allowed to use only parts of sentences (even just phrases!) and incorporate them into the grammar of the sentence around them.

Sounding like a cranky old man, Harold Bloom calls Quidditch “a bizarre intramural sport,” and he criticizes Harry Potter for playing it (2).

- Consider using verbs other than “*says*” to introduce a quotation. Verbs like “*explains*,” “*suggests*,” “*argues*,” and “*questions*” usually provide greater clarity.
- Quote exactly.
- Use punctuation accurately. (When quoting, you are allowed to adapt the punctuation to your new context. See section III.)

Paraphrase from a source ...

- When the information you want to present *does not need to be quoted directly*, but you still feel it should be included in your paper.

Paraphrasing, or restating a passage in *your own words*, allows you to demonstrate how well you understand the material, to phrase complicated ideas more simply, and to use more of your outside information without quoting too much.

Be sure to include a citation immediately after any paraphrased passages in your work.¹

When paraphrasing...

- Keep the meaning as close to the original as possible, without using the language of the original author. This can include using synonyms, using phrases in place of words (or vice versa), and rearranging the sentence.
- Avoid just plugging in synonyms for each word; it almost never gets the meaning right, and it can sound downright strange. Always use a blend of techniques to make the writing sound natural.

Original: “A vast concourse of inadequate works, for adults and for children, crams the dustbins of the ages” (Bloom 3).

Poor paraphrase: An incalculable assembly of compositions, for grown persons and offspring, stuffs the dumpsters of all epochs (Bloom 3).

Better paraphrase: Both adult and children’s literature have their share of books that are severely lacking in quality (Bloom 3).

- If there’s a phrase from the original that you feel you have to use to make the paraphrase work, include it by putting it in quotes, and then continue the paraphrase around it.

¹ In paraphrasing, just as in quoting, you must cite the source of your information. Following MLA style, insert a parenthetical, or in-text, citation immediately at the end of the paraphrased material (see section 57a of *The Bedford Handbook*) and include the work’s full citation in your Works Cited list (see section 57b).

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According to Harold Bloom, there is a “vast concourse” of books of lesser quality existing in the world, both in literature for children and for adults (3).

II. Integrating Source Material into Your Writing

- **Repeat key words from the quote in your analysis.**

Eyeworks offered Suleman and her children a quarter-million dollars for the exclusive rights to film her family for 11 days and for the option to do so again. If the documentary is successful (it was set to be shown in Britain last week; a U.S. deal is pending), the crew will resume filming. “I made these choices out of the midst of being in survivor mode,” she explained. “I think 99 percent of people would have made the same decision.”

In making this set of decisions that 99 percent of us would have made, Suleman has boosted herself into the pantheon of multi-child, over-the-top television families so dysfunctional and pathologically exposed that they serve as a form of cathartic geek show for the rest of us.

—John Bowe, “The Octomom and her babies prepare for prime time,” *New York Times Magazine*, 12 Nov. 2009. Web. 17 Nov. 2009.

- **Use transition words to let your reader know how you feel about the quote.**

Addition: also, and, besides, furthermore, in addition, indeed, in fact, moreover, so too

Example: after all, as an illustration, for example, for instance, specifically, to take a case in point

Elaboration: actually, by extension, that is, in other words, to put it another way

Comparison: along the same lines, in the same way, likewise, similarly

Contrast: although, but, by contrast, conversely, despite the fact that, even though, however, in contrast, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, regardless, whereas, while yet

Cause/effect: accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, hence, in effect, since, so, then, therefore, thus

Concession: admittedly, although it is true, granted, naturally, of course, to be sure

Conclusion: as a result, consequently, hence, in conclusion, in short, in sum, therefore, thus, to sum up, to summarize, ultimately, to put it bluntly

- **Frame all quotes in a quote sandwich.** That is, **introduce** a quote and follow with **discussion or analysis** showing how the quoted passage pertains to your topic or claim. The introduction and discussion portions (the “bread” of the quote sandwich) are underlined in this example:

A review by Harold Bloom in the year 2000 cast doubt on whether or not “*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is going to prove a classic of children's literature” (3). Over a decade later, Bloom's doubts seem to have been dispelled by the continuing popularity of the books, the success of the film series, and even a new theme park modeled on the Hogwarts world.

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III. Changing a quotation to fit into surrounding sentences

1. Add, remove, or change words within a quotation where needed.

- Use **brackets** [...] to indicate any changes you make to quotations while fitting them into your sentences (for reasons of style, verb tense, or general understanding).

J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* describes a "performative sentence" as one which "do[es] not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all" and "is, or is a part of, the doing of an action" (5).

Even as Harry Potter exhibits "the characteristics typical of a *bildungsroman* [. . . **the novels**], also act as commentaries on the systems within the human world" (Parodium 4).

- Use **Ellipses** (...) to indicate that some unnecessary words have been left out of a quotation. However, when you quote just a word or short phrase, no ellipsis is necessary. Also, do not use an ellipsis to indicate that you have left out the beginning of a sentence; only missing words from the end or somewhere in the middle of a sentence need to be indicated with an ellipsis.

This phobic reaction is produced when "a danger signal felt and perceived by the conscious portion of the personality . . . becomes detached from a specific idea, object, or situation in daily life and is displaced to some symbolic idea or situation in the form of a specific fear" (Lachanmeyer 120).

2. Use block quotations selectively.

If you find you can't cut a quote down, or if you need to include some poetry, you will need to use a **block quote**. Block quotes are used in MLA papers for any passages of poetry or prose **longer than four lines**. They are set off from the left margin by 1 inch (forming the "block") and are always single-spaced.

According to Harold Bloom, in his scathing review of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*,

A vast concourse of inadequate works, for adults and for children, crams the dustbins of the ages. At a time when public judgment is no better and no worse than what is proclaimed by the ideological cheerleaders who have so destroyed humanistic study, anything goes. The cultural critics will, soon enough, introduce Harry Potter into their college curriculum, and *The New York Times* will go on celebrating another confirmation of the dumbing-down it leads and exemplifies. (Bloom 3)

Note: the parenthetical citation is placed *outside* the final punctuation when block quoting.

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IV. Introducing summaries and quotations

- X acknowledges that _____.
- X agrees that _____.
- X argues that _____.
- X believes that _____.
- X denies/does not deny that _____.
- X claims that _____.
- X complains that _____.
- X concedes that _____.
- X demonstrates that _____.
- X deplores the tendency that _____.
- X emphasizes that _____.
- X insists that _____.
- X observes that _____.
- X questions whether _____.
- X refutes the claim that _____.
- X reminds us that _____.
- X reports that _____.
- X suggests that _____.
- X urges us to _____.

V. Introducing and explaining quotations and paraphrased passages

- X states, “_____.”
- According to X, “_____.”
- X herself writes, “_____.”
- In her book, X maintains that “_____.”
- Writing in the journal *Commentary*, X complains that “_____.”
- In X’s view, “_____.”
- X agrees when she writes, “_____.”
- X disagrees when she writes, “_____.”
- X complicates matters further when she writes, “_____.”
- Basically, X is saying _____.
- In other words, X believes _____.
- In making this comment, X argues that _____.
- X insists that _____.
- X’s point is that _____.
- The essence of X’s argument is that _____.

The above templates are adapted from Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say*, New York: Norton, 2007

VI. Punctuating quoted words and passages

Place periods and commas **inside quotation marks** (see section 37f of *The Bedford Handbook*). This rule applies to quoted material, titles of works, and words used as words.

“Tainted Justice,” an article by Barbara Laker and Wendy Ruderman, received a Pulitzer Prize.

In a recent *Slate* article, Ben Yagoda considers the changing meaning of the word “nonplussed.”

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Exception: In the MLA style of parenthetical in-text citation (see section 57a of *The Bedford Handbook*), the period **follows** parenthetical citation.

The main findings were that they have a “demand for quality academic facilities and high academic achievement, a need for customization and research, a need for integration of technology into learning, and a usage of new communication modes” (Gardner and Eng 416).

VII. Practice Exercise

Drawing on the above templates and the quote sandwich format, choose a portion of Lewin’s argument to summarize or quote, making sure to cite the article appropriately. Then respond to the quote with your own thoughts, experiences, protests, etc. The above should comprise no more than 3 to 4 sentences.

Lewin, Tamar. “Record Level of Stress Found in College Freshmen.” *The New York Times*. 26 Jan. 2011. Web. 25 Feb. 2011.

For many young people, serious stress starts before college. The share of students who said on the survey that they had been frequently overwhelmed by all they had to do during their senior year of high school rose to 29 percent from 27 percent last year. The gender gap on that question was even larger than on emotional health, with 18 percent of the men saying they had been frequently overwhelmed, compared with 39 percent of the women. There is also a gender gap, studies have shown, in the students who seek out college mental health services, with women making up 60 percent or more of the clients.

VIII. Where in the *The Bedford Handbook*?

Section 37f: Use punctuation with quotation marks according to convention

Section 52: Managing information; avoiding plagiarism

Section 57: MLA documentation style