



Using Sources: Summarizing, Paraphrasing, and Quoting Directly

There are several types of sources that can be helpful as you write. These types include:

- An authoritative opinion, one coming from an expert in the field. A note of caution: make sure the person you're citing is a credible figure. Include their credentials if necessary in your paper.
- Factual evidence which comes from credible and reliable organizations and experts. Often, this evidence takes the form of statistics and other facts which can be accurately and reliably confirmed by measurement, scientific method, or some other well-established procedure.
- Lastly are examples you use to help bolster your points. These examples include information from case studies, (personal) anecdotes, and ethnographic studies.

There are three categories of information from which you may get your sources:

- First is the *primary category*. This material is drawn from people who were directly involved in an event or phenomenon. Examples of these sources include a literary work being analyzed, a first-time study of some phenomenon, letters between contemporaries at the time under study, diaries written by people who were present, autobiographies offering first-hand knowledge of an event, historical records, and many works of literature.
 - Keep in mind you may have to analyze these sources for truth and credibility as just because they were written by someone offering a first-hand account, it does not mean they accurately or justly represent that time period.
- *Secondary sources*, on the other hand, are written by those who have only indirect knowledge of some phenomenon and who rely on primary sources for their information. Many textbooks, biographies, literary criticism, and reviews are secondary sources.
- Lastly, there are *tertiary sources* (do you sense a theme here?). These sources are those which are most distant from the events and usually offer large compilations of a lot of secondary and primary categories. Works like anthologies, encyclopedias, and even some textbooks fall into this category.

Always find out what your professor's expectations are for sources. Not only which category to use, but from where to collect them. Some professors, for example, prefer you only use journals published by experts in the field. Others require you to use a certain date-range of materials. When in doubt, ask your professor for what their source expectations are.

To do this work well, go to your professor's office hours to see what types of sources they'd prefer you use. Then, you can meet with our research librarians to find the most relevant, useful, materials.

There are three methods you can use for incorporating sources:

- (1) **Summarizing:** Once you have determined which sources you want to use, record all of the important bibliographic info: author, title, journal title if appropriate, date of publication, publisher, place of publication, volume number, and inclusive page numbers.
 - Summarize the relevant material to provide context. This means sharing who the authors are (if asked), what the main points of the source are, what themes are under investigation, and any other material you believe the readers of your paper need to know about your sources to fully grasp your analysis, claims, argument, and/ or research.
 - Summary is key for to condensing lengthy information essential to your argument.
- (2) **Quoting:** If there are specific things your source claims that are key to your analysis, argument, and/ or research, you should preserve their wording and quote directly. This style of incorporating sources is key when you are including first-hand accounts of materials, analyzing literature, or citing from a film or play.
 - It is important, though, to avoid over quoting. A useful rule of thumb is to consider using two quotes per paragraph.
 - Block quotations should also be used incredibly sparingly. A useful rule of thumb is to avoid them entirely in papers under 5 pages.
 - Using quotations is key when the quote is very persuasive or memorable, or when you want to convincingly buttress your claim. But please use caution: some professors and disciplines do not allow for direct quotations. Then, you should use summary and paraphrasing only.
- (3) **Paraphrasing:** This method is useful when you want to show you understand the material by putting it into your own words. While summary tends to be more drawn out, taking up multiple sentences, paraphrasing is useful when you need to quickly clarify complicated ideas or language.
 - With paraphrasing, it is imperative that you always give credit where credit is due. Whose ideas are you sharing? What are their credentials? What materials are you using to paraphrase? Most of this information is covered in an in-text citation or footnote so make sure you are doing those things correctly.

There are also useful methods for incorporating quotations. These include:

- Introduce the quotation: Open the material with an attributive phrase that identifies the speaker and indicates his/her credentials.
 - i. EX: According to Prof. Lynn Z. Bloom, a composition expert at the University of Connecticut, the average American sentence is twenty-six words. (Did you just count this one? It's not.)
- Split the quotation: To do this work well, you can use one of the common attributive verbs listed at the bottom of this resource.
 - i. EX: "While conventional wisdom suggests that an average sentence is very short," claims University of Connecticut composition specialist Prof. Lynn Z. Bloom, "research indicates that the average American sentence is 26 words long" (23).
- Mix paraphrasing and quoting: This work requires you to summarize some details of the text and to directly quote others in the same sentence.
 - i. EX: The average American sentence, according to Bloom, is 26 words, contrary to "convention wisdom [which] suggests that an average sentence is very short" (23).

- Use **block quotes**: You'll have to blend the material from the quote smoothly into your own prose, too, otherwise, it's not worth it to use a block quote.
 - i. EX: But according to Prof. Lynn Z. Bloom of the University of Connecticut, common perception

Suggests that an average sentence is very short, [but] research indicates that the average American sentence is 26 words long. A study of 56 professional American writers, including novelists, journalists, academicians, screenwriters, and others, discovered that sentence length could easily vary from a single word to over a hundred and twenty words, that sentence types and syntax also varied widely in any given passage, and that writers felt such variety in length and structure contributed to the flow and readability of their prose (23-24).

Note: You can also use colons to introduce quotations or block quotes.

• **Verbs you can use to attribute information to sources:**

adds	agrees	asks	argues
asserts	believes	comments	claims
compares	concedes	condemns	concludes
considers	contends	defends	declares
denies	derides	disputes	disagrees
emphasizes	explains	holds	finds
illustrates	implies	maintains	insists
notes	observes	rejects	points out
relates	reports	reveals	responds
says	sees	speculates	shows
states	stresses	thinks	suggests
warns	writes		

One key point to remember as you write is to avoid plagiarism:

- Plagiarism happens when you use the thoughts, information, and words of others as if they were your own, without citing or quotation marks.
- Blatant plagiarism means you've taken another's words word-for-word (verbatim) without an in-text citation AND without quotation marks.
- Unintentional plagiarism means that you are paraphrasing or copying too closely from someone else's material, even if you do provide in-text credit to that other source. The words, sentence structure, and order of ideas/facts should be your own.
- Patch writing means that you're cutting and pasting material, usually gleaned from the Internet, into your paper without reconceiving it in your own words and within the context of your own argument. It's not only wrong; it will also result in a very uneven, haphazard, and inferior paper.

Resource:

Summary of Allyn & Bacon Handbook, pp. 532-52 (Using Sources, Chap. 35)