

ENG 100 College English

Lesson: Quotations, Paraphrases, and Summaries

This lesson will help you understand the distinctions among quotations, paraphrases, and summaries. You will be able to compare and contrast the three terms, by practicing these skills.

What are the differences among quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing?

These three ways of incorporating other writers' work into your own writing differ according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing.

Quotations must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author.

Paraphrasing involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly.

Summarizing involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.

Why use quotations, paraphrases, and summaries?

Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries serve many purposes. You might use them to:

1. Provide support for claims or add credibility to your writing
2. Refer to work that leads up to the work you are now doing
3. Give examples of several points of view on a subject
4. Call attention to a position that you wish to agree or disagree with
5. Highlight a particularly striking phrase, sentence, or passage by quoting the original
6. Distance yourself from the original by quoting it in order to cue readers that the words are not your own
7. Expand the breadth or depth of your writing

Writers frequently intertwine summaries, paraphrases, and quotations. As part of a summary of an article, a chapter, or a book, a writer might include paraphrases of various key points blended with quotations of striking or suggestive phrases as in the following example:

*In his famous and influential work *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud argues that dreams are the "royal road to the unconscious" (page #), expressing in coded imagery the dreamer's unfulfilled wishes through a process known as the "dream-work" (page #). According to Freud, actual but unacceptable desires are censored internally and subjected to coding through layers of condensation and displacement before emerging in a kind of rebus puzzle in the dream itself (page #).*

How to use quotations, paraphrases, and summaries

Practice summarizing the essay and use paraphrases and quotations as you go. It might be helpful to follow these steps:

1. Read the entire text, noting the key points and main ideas.
2. Summarize in your own words what the single main idea of the essay is.
3. Paraphrase important supporting points that come up in the essay.
4. Consider any words, phrases, or brief passages that you believe should be quoted directly.

There are several ways to integrate quotations into your text

1. Often, a short quotation works well when integrated into a sentence.
2. Longer quotations can stand alone.
3. Remember that quoting should be done only sparingly; be sure that you have a good reason to include a direct quotation when you decide to do so.

Characteristics of a Summary

"The purpose of a summary is to give a reader a condensed and objective account of the main ideas and features of a text. Usually, a summary has between one and three paragraphs or one hundred to three hundred words, depending on the length and complexity of the original essay and the intended audience and purpose.

Typically, a summary will do the following:

- Cite the author and title of the text. In some cases, the place of publication or the context for the essay may also be included.
- Indicate the main ideas of the text. Accurately representing the main ideas (while omitting the less important details) is the major goal of the summary.
- Use direct quotations of key words, phrases, or sentences. Quote the text directly for a few key ideas; paraphrase the other important ideas (that is, express the ideas in your own words.)
- Include author tags. ("According to Ehrenreich" or "as Ehrenreich explains") to remind the reader that you are summarizing the author and the text, not giving your own ideas. . . .
- Avoid summarizing specific examples or data unless they help illustrate the thesis or main idea of the text.
- Report the main ideas as objectively as possible. . . . Do not include your reactions; save them for your response.

(Stephen Reid, *The Prentice Hall Guide for Writers*, 2003)

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