

Quotation, Summary, Paraphrase, and Synthesis

Quotation: The exact words from a source passage presented in quotation marks

Summary: A relatively brief, objective account, in your own words, of the main ideas in a source passage. To summarize is to condense a long, detailed passage.

Paraphrase: A restatement, in your own words, of a passage of text. Its structure reflects the structure of the source passage. Paraphrases are sometimes the same length as the source passage, sometimes shorter. Keep in mind that only an occasional word (but not whole phrases) from the original source appears in the paraphrase, and that a paraphrase's sentence structure does not reflect that of the source.

Synthesis: The integration of quoted, summarized, and/or paraphrased source material with your own ideas to create something new. It's not enough to just string together source material. As a college writer you must explain, discuss, criticize, and interpret source material. You should build on the work and ideas of others, not rely on it. This is synthesis—bringing your ideas together with the ideas of others to create something new.

When you quote, summarize, or paraphrase a source passage you must cite your source.

Consider this source passage:

Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes.

Source: Lester, James D. *Writing Research Papers*. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.

Now a legitimate paraphrase:

In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester 46-47).

And an acceptable summary:

Students should take just a few notes in direct quotation from sources to help minimize the amount of quoted material in a research paper (Lester 46-47).

Here's a plagiarized version:

Students often use too many direct quotations when they take notes, resulting in too many of them in the final research paper. In fact, probably only about 10% of the final copy should consist of directly quoted material. So it is important to limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes.