9

Discussing & Citing Sources

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Learning Outcomes

In this chapter, you'll learn how to

- differentiate between summary, paraphrase, quoting, and patchwriting
- effectively and ethically incorporate sources into your own writing
- follow an appropriate style of documentation

9.1 Key Terms

An original bombard—is this what being bombarded with information overload feels like? Photo by [PHGCOM](#)

We live in a world where we're constantly bombarded by information. We hold in our hands the ability to google any question we can think of and get thousands, if not millions, of answers. Thanks, Siri and Alexa!

It's become increasingly important to know not only how to sift through all the junk to get to the good answers but what to do with that information once you've found it. How can you share information you find in an ethical and convincing way? How can you make it so your writing is easy to fact-check so people will trust what you say? The answer: properly citing your sources. (Or in other words, telling us where you got your information.)

But it goes deeper than that. Before we start, we need to define some key types of source citation: quotation, summary, paraphrase, and patchwriting.

Definitions

Quotation	Copying the exact words of a text.
Summary	Restating the main ideas of a large or small text in your own words while significantly reducing the length.
Paraphrase	Rewriting a sentence or a short passage into your own words while keeping a similar length.
Patchwriting	Taking a text and changing some words or substituting synonyms or changing some grammar but not changing it enough to be considered your own words.

The key to properly citing sources is knowing which of these citation techniques to use (or not use) and how to do it. Some students think that all they need to do is slap a name and a year in parentheses after the quotes in their paper and then they're all good. But citing sources runs much deeper than that, and these four terms—summary, paraphrase, quotation, and patchwriting—have a lot to do with it. We'll talk more in depth about each of these techniques in the next section. But first, we need to look at what's actually going on in college papers.

9.2 How Do Students Cite Sources? Badly.

You might not know this, but you're probably bad at summarizing texts. How do I know? Because I'm guessing if you're reading this, then you're probably a college student, and college students are almost universally bad at summarizing texts. How do I know that? Research.

Rebecca Moore Howard and Sandra Jamieson are fantastic researchers famous for [The Citation Project](#)—a major study to find out how college students typically cite sources (2013). Howard and Jamieson looked at 174 student research papers from 16 different colleges. They tried to represent all types of schools and populations from ivy-league to private religious universities to public community colleges and from all areas of the country so their data could be generalized.

Howard and Jamieson's team spent months checking every single source listed in each student's references page and compared the original source to how the information was cited in the student's paper. (How would you like that job?) Their findings were surprising and revealing:

The Results

Now back to those key terms: Of the 1,911 citations of 930 sources they looked at, guess how many of those citations were direct quotations quoted word-for-word from the source?

> 46%

How many were paraphrases?

> 32%

And how many were considered patchwriting?

> 16%

Now what about summary?

> Only 6%

That means that only 6% of the time did students choose to summarize their sources in their papers (p. 123). Why should we care? What's so great about summaries, you ask? Hold that thought—I'll tell you in the next section. For now, just remember that 94% of the time students chose not to do it.

Before we move on, there's one more surprising finding from Howard and Jamieson's study that I want to point out to you. When the researchers checked the students' sources and their citations, they also looked at which part of the sources—mostly articles and book chapters—students took their citations from.

Guess which page of the sources 46% of citations came from?

> Page 1

You're not on vacation. If you only cite from the first two pages of a source, you're probably being a lazy researcher.
Photo by [Sincerely Media](#) on Unsplash

You read that right. Almost half of all citations came from the first page of the source! If you think about it, the first page usually doesn't contain much more than an abstract and maybe an introductory paragraph or two. So it's not exactly the most meaty part of a paper with the most felicitous quotes.

And 23% more of the students' citations came from guess which page?

> Page 2

Yep. That means that about 70% of citations came from the first two pages of a source—before most sources have gotten beyond the Introduction. Why is this significant? Because our job as writing teachers is to help you engage with your sources—to get to know them, to understand what their results mean, to make connections with other sources. But you can't get to know your sources in just the first two pages. This suggests that students are reading superficially, looking for the first decent quotes they can find, and not taking the time to understand what the paper's main points are or what their results mean. To be frank, this shows that students are being lazy. And this is a problem—which is where Summary comes in. Read on to find out how Summary can save the research day.

9.3 A Citation DTR: Summary Paraphrase, Quotation, and Patchwriting

Summary, I love you!

Love! Photo by Ben White on Unsplash

Summary is the most felicitous type of citation and the most sophisticated. The reason most students choose not to summarize when citing sources is that summary has the highest degree of difficulty of all the types of source citation—and for good reason: you have to actually understand your source in order to summarize it. You can quote anything you want to without ever understanding what it means, but in a summary, you not only translate the text into your own words, you also shorten its length and provide just the highlights. That means that you have to understand what the most important points are. That is definitely harder than just quoting all the time, but if you add more summary to your papers, they will also increase in sophistication and probably in grade as well.

By learning how to summarize, you can show your research prowess and make better, more insightful points when you write—and your readers (and teacher) will notice. If I were having a DTR (Define the Relationship talk) with Summary, I would say,

> Summary, I love you!

Not only can summary help you make better points, there is an advantage to putting things into your own words: you can control the language and match your writing style. And you can also highlight the parts of the sources that are the most relevant to your own paper, the parts you want your audience to notice. You can also talk about ideas and findings in general instead of sticking to shorter, individual points.

If you like more technical terms, here's the way Howard and Jamieson defined summary in their study:

The author

- writes from a paragraph or more (technically at least 3 sentences)
- restates and condenses the text by at least 50%
- employs "fresh language," or in other words, only uses 20% or less of the language from the passage (Howard, et al., 2010, p. 181)

Because summary is so powerful, I tell students to make a goal to summarize 50-70% of the time in their papers. If they're writing a literature review, I say to use summary almost exclusively, often summarizing more than one article in the same sentence. One of the best ways to add summary to your papers is if you've already written a good annotated bibliography during your source-gathering phase (see Chapter 8). In any case, my advice is to try to strengthen your relationship with summary. When you summarize a shorter passage, you should cite the page number where you found the information as well as the author and year, but when you talk about the ideas in a source in general, you don't need to list a page number—just the author and year.

Paraphrase, I like you!

Paraphrase is an acceptable form of citation and has a medium degree of difficulty. It's similar to summary because you're also translating information into your own words. This comes with the same advantages of being able to control the language of your sentences and match your own writing style. By using your own language, you can also point out what's most relevant to your paper, so that's good. And by putting it in your own words, you prove that you at least understand what's being said by the author(s) in that particular passage. However, the problem is that when you paraphrase, you only work with a short passage at a time (usually only a sentence or two). I know this might sound alarming, but for this reason, paraphrasing can actually be dangerous.

Paraphrase = Like! (Public Domain)

When you work sentence-by-sentence, you run the risk of doing what I did in my sixth grade report about Penguins. I opened the encyclopedia book labeled "P" (yes, I was very old school) and read a sentence about penguins. Then I would turn to my (really old school) computer and try to write the same sentence in my own words, but I would think to myself, "The encyclopedia said it so well, I can't really think of a different way to say that."

So I would substitute a few synonyms for some of the words or rearrange the order of the sentence, but I kept most of the encyclopedia's wording and all of the ideas. Not cool. Technically, that's considered plagiarism—taking someone else's words or ideas and calling them your own—and I'm lucky I didn't get into trouble in sixth grade. But I was eleven at the time, and my teacher probably recognized that I was an emerging writer still very new to writing about research. She knew I would eventually learn how to cite my sources. The trick is that now that we're all adults, we're expected to know how to cite sources, so the stakes are much higher. When plagiarism is detected—even if it was unintentional—you can get into trouble, fail a paper, or even fail a class or get put on probation. Many well-regarded people have gotten in big

trouble for plagiarizing—even when it was unintentional. The consequences are serious, so take your citations seriously as well.

Plagiarism is like taking the words out of someone else's mouth. Photo by Christian Gertenbach on Unsplash

So if you want to avoid the dangers of unintentional plagiarism, try not to work sentence-by-sentence and stick as much as you can to summary (oh, Summary, you're so beautiful!). But there are definitely times you'll need to paraphrase, so here's Howard and Jamieson's definition of paraphrase to make things more precise:

In a paraphrase, the writer

- deals with a short passage [up to a paragraph]
- does not condense much
- employs "fresh language," but sometimes keeps key words, (again, 20% or less) (Howard, et al., 2010, p. 181)

I tell students to paraphrase around 20-30% of the time. When should you choose to paraphrase? When you're talking about a specific idea or point that an author made that you want to refer to but that doesn't need to be quoted because the wording itself isn't important. Just be sure to cite the page number(s) where you found that information as well as the author and year. I like to tell my students that if their instinct is to quote something, look at the wording and decide if it is really special, really unique. If the specific wording doesn't matter, try paraphrasing.

Quotation, I just want to be friends.
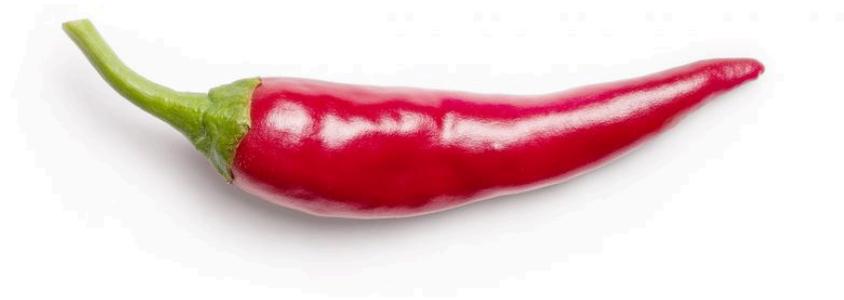
A little quotation goes a long way. Photo by [Flow Graphics](#) on Unsplash.

Like jalapeno peppers, quotations should be used sparingly. I know, I know, you're probably thinking, "But I thought I was supposed to pepper my papers with quotes!" You've got the wrong kind of pepper. Quotes are not the salt and pepper you sprinkle all over your food—instead think, jalapeno pepper. A little goes a long way. (Photo Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/upeters/14181186453 CC BY-NC 2.0)

Quotations should stay in the Friend Zone ([Public Domain](#))

Obviously, quotation has the lowest degree of difficulty of all the citation styles because all you have to do is take an author's words exactly. But if you just use quote after quote, it will seem like you can't speak for yourself or that you don't actually understand your sources. So put quotations in the Friend Zone and hang out with them only occasionally. Save your quotes for those times when an author says something in a unique or special way and you want to highlight their language. Or if you want to highlight an expert's authority, you can include a poignant quote. Again, with quotes, you're working sentence-by-sentence, so in order to use them, you don't have to understand the context of a quote or how it fits into the bigger picture. Try to avoid paparazzi syndrome—don't take things out of context. It can be all too tempting to find a quote that supports your point without understanding the context or including all sides. Here's Howard and Jamieson's details about quotation:

In a quotation, the writer

- copies the wording exactly
- puts quotation marks around all copied words (please!)
- Long quotes (more than 40 words) are cited differently (usually indented as a block, see your style guide)

I tell my students to use quotation only 5-10% of the time when you're citing sources; use summary and paraphrase the rest of the time. Wait until you have that "killer quote." If you're writing a literature review—especially in the social sciences—then you should almost never quote. If you do need to quote, put quotation marks around all words that belong to that author and cite author's name (use only their last name) and year. More importantly, you need to cite the page number each time you quote. In APA, for example, it should look like this: (Charles, 2019, p. 345).

I also like to challenge my students to always introduce a quote (and usually also a paraphrase) and also comment about it afterward. If it's by a famous person, say so in your paper instead of just listing their name in the citation at the end. Comment on how the quote is relevant. We'll talk more about using evidence in your paper in Chapter 10 on Literature Reviews.

One caveat is that if you're writing a paper that analyzes a literary text like a poem or novel (rare in the social sciences), you are supposed to quote often from the literary work itself as part of your analysis. But the reason you're supposed to quote in this case instead of paraphrase is that the wording is literary—which by definition means it's special and unique. So it still follows the rules of when to quote vs. paraphrase—quote when the specific wording matters. But remember that literary analyses are the only time when a lot of quoting is considered felicitous.

Patchwriting, I'm getting a restraining order!

Go away, Patchwriting! Photo by Jonathan Sharp on Unsplash

Patchwriting is so sixth grade. The penguin paper I described above was really an instance of patchwriting. Patchwriting is where a writer—whether intentionally or unintentionally—takes a text, changes some words or substitutes synonyms or changes some grammar but doesn't change it enough to be considered their own words. The degree of difficulty is extremely low because you don't have to understand the text well or even quote well to do it. You can be sloppy. But beware: the consequences can be as dire as if you plagiarize outright.

Howard's definition:

- "Copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes" (Howard, 1993, p. 233)

In fact, most schools and institutions have a plagiarism code, and you should review yours so you understand what can happen. For example, BYU's statement on Academic Honesty refers to patchwriting as "plagiarism mosaic" and lists many of the consequences that can occur to writers if they intentionally or unintentionally plagiarize. Patchwriting and other types of plagiarism disrespect the research process and negate the work of others. Ethics are very important at universities and in the workplace and are one of the keys to creating new knowledge, so you should maintain high ethical standards in your research and writing. Commit now to being precise in your use of sources and never deliberately plagiarizing. Not only will this keep you out of serious trouble, it will also earn you respect now and in the future.

If you want to see how patchwriting and a laxity about sources—even if inadvertent—can get you bad attention, read this article about Melania Trump's Republican National Convention speech that many people believe was patchwritten from Michelle Obama's previous Democratic National Convention speech. Or watch this side-by-side video and judge for yourself if you think Ms. Trump's speech was original enough or if it should be considered plagiarism/patchwriting.

Either way, she got much more attention for the plagiarism question than she did for her message. Don't let there be a question about your citations—cite responsibly, and you'll avoid problems like these.

A Word on Intentional Plagiarism

On a final note, it should go without saying, but just so I'm perfectly clear, it is never okay to take credit for someone else's words. It doesn't matter if you've been sick and have a scary deadline or if your roommate bought a paper off the internet and turned it in with no consequences or if you don't get an A in this class, you'll lose your scholarship—if you deliberately take credit for someone else's work, you're effectively stealing and could lose much more than your scholarship. Not only could fail the assignment, fail the class, or even get kicked out of school, you will most definitely lose your dignity. (Cue Whitney Houston song "The Greatest Love of All.") And now that there are many kinds of plagiarism-checking software readily available (like TurnItIn that's used at BYU), it's extremely likely that you will get caught. Resolve now to never fall into the temptation to turn in someone else's work. If you get caught doing so in the workplace, you'll most likely lose your job. And you'll also lose your credibility and respect. And don't forget that you could also get into trouble with the author you took from.

Here's what famous author Nora Roberts had to say when she discovered another author had stolen some passages of her writing:

> "If you plagiarize, I will come for you. If you take my work, you will pay for it and I will do my best to see you don't write again."
>
> from Locus Magazine https://locusmag.com/2019/06/roberts-vs-plagiarism/

Don't lose your integrity for a relationship with plagiarism. It will end badly. Have a DTR with your sources and decide that you will love summary, like paraphrase, be friends with quotations, and run far, far away from patchwriting and plagiarism. If you can do this, you'll write happily ever after.

9.4 How to Cite Sources

Now that you've committed to citing your sources properly, let's make sure you know how to do so. Generally speaking, you need to give enough publication information that the person reading your paper can easily go find your source and see where your information came from. You also need to make sure it's clear which information comes from the source as opposed to your own ideas or words. I spent one semester working as a documentation editor for BYU's Honors Program journal called *Insight*. My entire job was to go through the articles that were being published and look up every single citation, find the actual book or article, and make sure everything was cited properly. It was tedious, but it taught me how important good citation is.
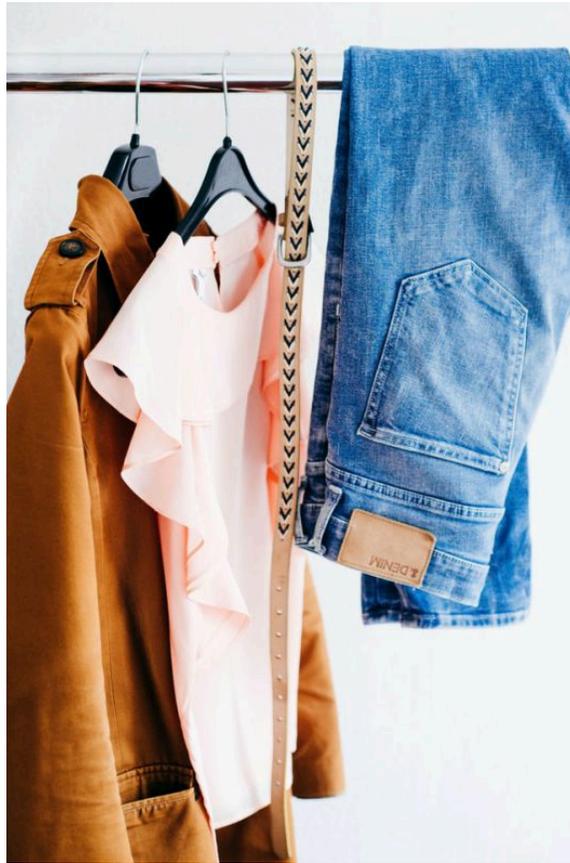
Not this kind of style guide! Photo by Alexandra Gorn at Unsplash

You probably know that when you summarize, paraphrase, or quote from someone else, you need to include information to acknowledge the author. How do you know which information to cite? How can you tell what format you put this information? You need to follow a style guide. All publishers, news outlets, academic journals, universities, and even most companies have a style guide. They do this to make sure all their publications are consistent and clear and reflect the right image. Here's a link to BYU's Style Guide.

To be honest, the rules of different style guides can be arbitrary—is it really important if you capitalize every word in a title or only the first word? No. What's important is that you follow the rules of your style guide so your writing matches your readers' expectations and so they can easily find where your sources came from. It's important to note that other countries that value collectivism over individualism might have different ideas about citation and what belongs to an individual or not, but in this class, you need to follow standard American rules.

Style Guides
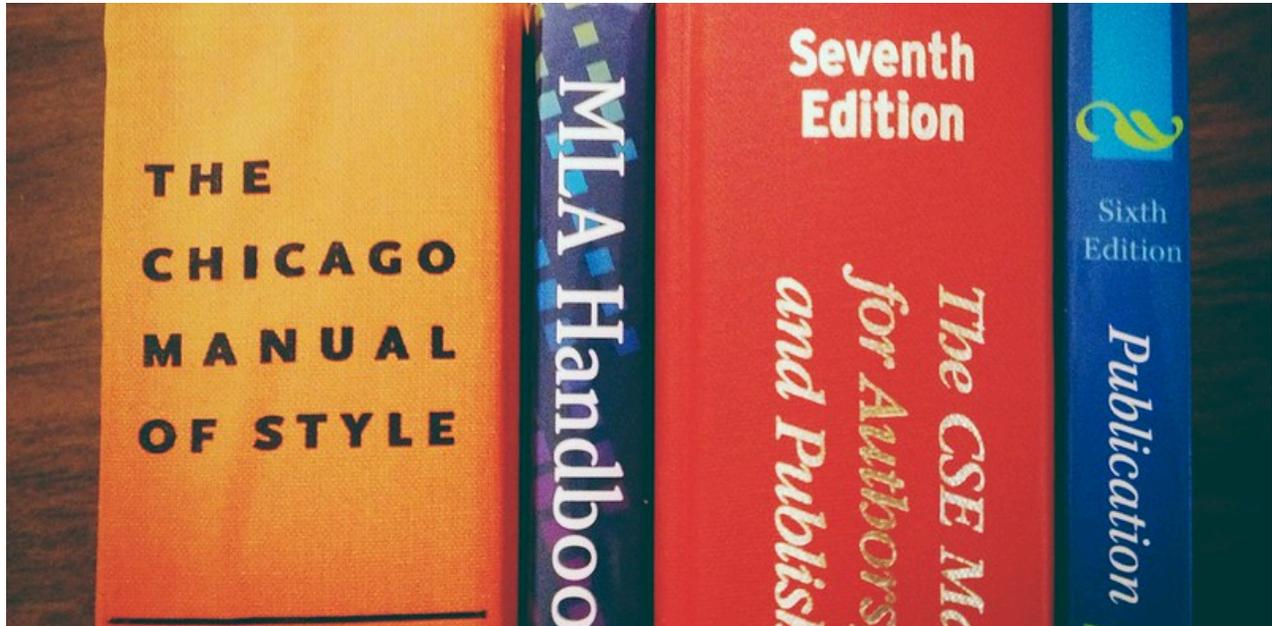
These are some of the types of Style Guides used in various fields. Photo by fixedandfrailing on Flickr.

In most fields, there's a standard style guide or citation manual that people follow for the proper format for citing sources. The manual consists of the formatting rules that a governing board has decided upon to keep their publications consistent. They not only list rules for citations but often also talk about clarity, avoiding bias, and even for where to put the page number on the page.

Here are some common style guides:
APA, MLA, Chicago/Turabian, AP, IEEE, AMA, and ASA. Sometimes specific journals have their own in-house rules instead of following a bigger style guide.

If you ever have a question about how to cite something, look it up in your field's style guide. There you can find in-depth answers to questions of format, style, punctuation, etc. However, sometimes you just need the basics as a reference. Here is a link to the Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab)'s pages on style guides and citation. You can find information for all the guides listed above: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html.

I suggest you bookmark these and refer to them often as you write. Use these as a guide but only under that assumption that any detailed questions you have should be looked up in the actual manual. Please note that when you generate a references or bibliography page from citation software like RefWorks, you'll still need to go through and double check each source because the citation software often puts items in the wrong places or misses details like italics or capitalization. I've found this to be especially true with book chapters.

It's important to know the difference between in-text citations—citing sources inside the sentences of your paper—and citations in your references list at the end of your paper. Generally, in-text citations occur inside parentheses, include the author's name, the publication year, and the page number if necessary. These in-text citations are there so your readers can refer back to your references page where the full publication information should be. See the Purdue OWL pages and your field's style guide for all the information on creating references pages.

How to Summarize

Even when you're summarizing an entire study that was published, you still need to cite your source. If what you're summarizing can be found on a specific page of a publication, then include the page. Otherwise, follow your style guide's recommendations for in-text citations. You also need to make it clear where your writing and ideas stop and

your source's start. If you mention the author's name in your sentence, you don't need to repeat it in the parenthetical reference and you should add the year right after their name; however, if you don't mention the author's name, everything goes at the end in the parenthetical reference.

How to Paraphrase

Like summary, you should follow your style manual's guidelines for in-text citations. However, because a paraphrase comes from a short passage, you need to include the page number(s) as well. If your source is a webpage, you can include paragraph numbers instead.

How to Quote

Quoting is much like paraphrase where you need to cite the page number with your in-text citation (or paragraph number for a webpage). Use quotation marks to make it clear which exact words come from your source versus which ones are your own and double-check that you quoted correctly.

9.5 Let's Practice

Now we're going to do an activity that Howard and Jamieson reference in their article on student citation practices (add reference): you're going to summarize, paraphrase, and quote from Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Now It's Your Turn
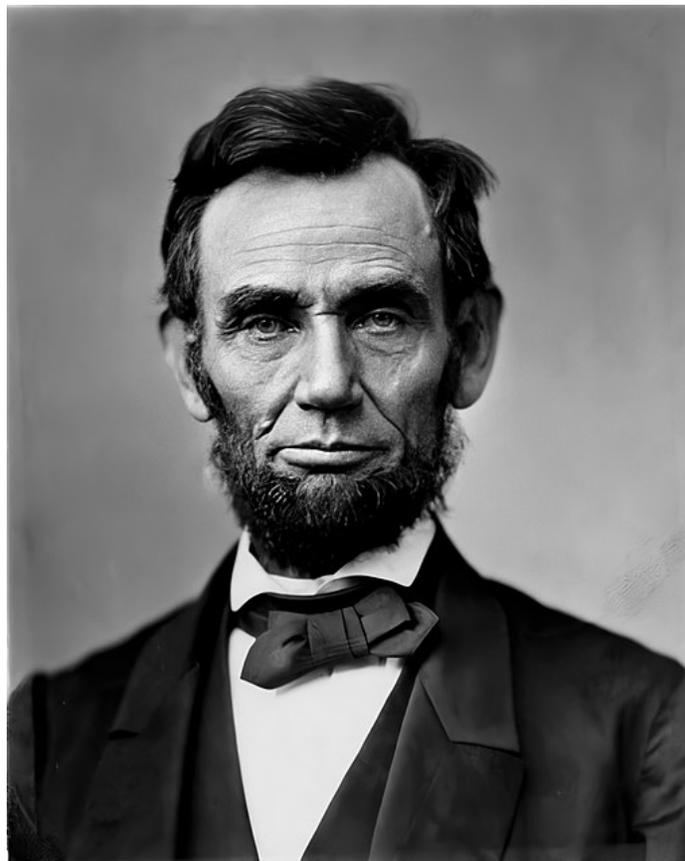
President Abraham Lincoln. (Public Domain)

First, read the Gettysburg Address all the way through—don't worry it's short. Note the most important points and any particularly poignant phrases. If you need to look up how to cite this source inside your text, go to the Purdue OWL citation webpage or look it up in your style guide.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain— that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gettysburg_Address

Summary

Now you're going to practice summarizing. Often the way you summarize will depend upon your audience. If you're explaining something to your 5-year-old cousin, you'll use different language than if you're summarizing the address for an academic paper. Choose a specific audience and/or context for your summary before you begin.

> ### Try Summary
>
> Your turn. Please summarize the Gettysburg Address in 2 sentences. You may choose a specific audience/context for your summary. Include proper in-text citation.

Do you see how in a summary you must distill the most important ideas into a much shorter length? This is hard because you need to understand what the most important ideas are, but it also allows you to explain things in your own words and adjust to your audience.

Paraphrase

This time you're going to practice paraphrasing. To get practice adjusting your wording to a different situation, choose a new audience and/or context for your paraphrase. Remember that you should choose only a short passage to paraphrase, and your text should be about the same length as the original, just in your own words. Because a paraphrase should come from a short passage, any in-text citations should include the page number(s). Since the Gettysburg Address is so short, use the paragraph number like this: (para. 2).

> ### Try Paraphrase
>
> Now paraphrase 1-3 sentences from the Gettysburg Address. Choose a new audience/context for this paraphrase. Include proper in-text citation.

Do you see how summary and paraphrase allow you to change your wording and approach based on your audience? For example, if you were simply quoting, it would be much harder to explain something to a 5-year-old.

Quotation

Now I want you to choose a quote from the Gettysburg Address where the wording really sticks out as beautiful or poignant or illustrates a point well. This is the trick with quoting—you don't want to just quote large chunks. You need to be selective. In fact, if you'd like, you can write a sentence that is mostly in your words but adds short quotations inside your sentence. Quotes work best if you introduce them in your own words and/or give commentary about them after. In-text citations are the same as with paraphrases. Include the page number(s), or in the case of the Gettysburg Address, use the paragraph number.

Try Quotation

Choose a particularly meaningful or beautiful part of the Gettysburg Address to quote. Don't forget to introduce the quote and/or comment on it afterward. Choose a new audience/context again. Include proper in-text citations.

Conclusion: Choose Your Own Adventure

Now that you know how to cite sources, you're ready to start focusing on writing your paper. Your teacher has probably either assigned you to write a literature review or a proposal next. So next choose the chapter of whichever paper you've been assigned (Chapter 10 for Literature Reviews or Chapter 13 for Proposals), and you can continue your research journey.

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Cristie Cowles Charles teaches writing and literature courses at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. She enjoys sparking a love for writing in her students--or at least a love for having had written (it's always worth it in the end, right?). She thinks pumpkin pie counts as a vegetable, is married to a super hot mechanical engineering and neuroscience professor (yes, they exist), and adores her five magnificent children.

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