

LBCC Writing Center: Using Sources

There are three ways to effectively incorporate another writer's work into your writing: summary, paraphrase, and direct quotation. The example text for this handout will be the 2015 published version of J. K. Rowling's 2008 Harvard commencement speech. For the purposes of this handout, we will use MLA citation. Please consult your assignment guidelines to find out which citation style your instructor requires.

Summarizing:

What is a summary?

- A summary is an overview of an author's words that condenses and highlights only the main idea and its supporting points.

When should you summarize?

Summaries are useful when you would like to capture an author's main idea and supporting points to strengthen your own. It is especially helpful when you want to use information from a large body of text.

Paraphrasing:

What is a paraphrase?

- A paraphrase is a restatement of an author's idea in your own words that is generally the same length as the author's words and should show a clear understanding of the original source.

When should you paraphrase?

- Paraphrasing is useful when you would like to incorporate an author's idea into your own writing without directly quoting them. By restating an author's words, you can use key details from the author's quote to support your own points.

Direct Quotation:

What is direct quotation?

- A direct quotation uses an author's exact words. The quote matches the source word-for-word and must be inside quotation marks.

When should you use a direct quotation?

- A direct quotation is useful when the original idea is uniquely phrased or filled with statistics and may be difficult to summarize or paraphrase. It is not to be used instead of your own thoughts, but rather as a tool for strengthening or enhancing your own points and includes a lead-in phrase.

How to summarize a source:

1. Identify the author's main idea and supporting points.
2. Write a sentence or two that highlights these points.
3. Provide a lead-in and an in-text citation.

For example:

- Original source book: J. K. Rowling's *Very Good Lives*
- Sample Summary: In her book, *Very Good Lives*, J. K. Rowling argues that success comes from experiencing failure and empathizing with others.

How to paraphrase:

1. Read the author's passage a few times to make sure you understand its meaning.
2. Restate the author's idea in your own words to support your ideas.
3. Provide a lead-in and an end text citation.

For example:

- Original source: Unlike any other creature on this planet, human beings can learn and understand without having experienced.
- Paraphrase: J. K. Rowling observes that human beings are unique in that they don't have to experience something to comprehend and learn from it (56).

How to directly quote:

1. Read the author's passage closely to be sure you understand the meaning.
2. Copy the author's words correctly.
3. Introduce your quote with a lead-in and integrate it smoothly.
4. Provide a signal phrase and an in-text citation.

For example:

- Original source: Unlike any other creature on the planet, human beings can learn and understand without having experienced.
- Quoting the sentence with a signal phrase: Rowling observes that "unlike any other creature on this planet, human beings can learn and understand without having experienced" (56).

Here, the **signal phrase**, or lead-in, is placed at the beginning of the sentence, but you can also place in the middle or after the quote. Here are some examples:

- At the end: "Unlike any other creature on this planet, human beings can learn and understand without having experienced," Rowling observes (56).
- In the middle: "Unlike any other creature on this planet," Rowling observes, "human beings can learn and understand without having experienced" (56).

Source citation: Rowling, J.K. *Very Good Lives*. Little, Brown and Company, 2015.

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