

Quote, Paraphrase, Summary

What is the difference?

Writers need to decide how to present information from outside sources. There are three basic ways to do this: quote, paraphrase, and summary. The goal for each is to represent the original source accurately. Signal phrases and citation attribute the words or ideas to the original author. A signal phrase refers to the author in the sentence. Citation provides basic bibliographic details in a footnote, endnote, or parentheses at the end of a sentence (Author, year, page).

Quotes bring a source directly into a piece through the exact wording of the original. Use quotation marks at the beginning and end of the passage; punctuation that is before the quote is outside the mark, but punctuation after it belongs inside, “like this.” Parenthetical citation placed at the end of the sentence will move the period outside the mark “like this” (Author, page). Introduce block quotes as part of a sentence by using a colon:

A long quote, over 40 words or 4 lines, is indented as a block of text without using quotation marks. Different citation styles such as APA, ASA, and MLA have distinct formatting rules; check specific requirements. Usually, final punctuation occurs before the citation at the end of the quote, like this. (Citation)

Paraphrases refer to a source through your own words by interpreting what the author means. Indicate a paraphrase by using a signal phrase. For example, according to Author Soandso, citing sources is simply good academic manners. Leaving out a page number is often allowed when paraphrasing, but always be clear that the ideas are not your own.

Summaries are a form of paraphrase focused on the main ideas of a source. Incorporate brief summaries to offer background or credibility in an essay. Students and scholars use summary in annotated bibliographies and literature reviews. These will use a full reference entry that provides all publishing details in the selected citation style as a heading for one or two paragraphs. Specifications differ but the aim is to provide a detailed description of the source and its relevance to a topic or field of study.

When should I quote?

- When the wording is very, very good; it makes a point so well you cannot improve it
- The source is well known; it is an authority in the field and adds credibility
- Author or the work itself is the emphasis of a point
- A passage uses professional terms or jargon which are difficult to put into other words

When should I paraphrase?

- The style does not fit with your project; for example, information is written in jargon your audience will not understand or the vocabulary is too simple for your purpose
- The ideas or facts needed can be explained briefly
- To demonstrate a deep understanding of the original idea

When should I summarize?

- When the main points, not specific details, are important to your piece
- The passage or work provides background information not central to your point; it provides context for the reader
- Writers often need to summarize whole articles, books, movies or websites

Sample Passage with a Chicago Style footnote

Obviously the card catalog of the small town library is primitive compared to today's online research systems, but the research skills that Eco teaches are perhaps even more relevant today. Eco's system demands critical thinking, resourcefulness, creativity, attention to detail, and academic pride and humility; these are precisely the skills that aid students overwhelmed by the ever-growing demands made on their time and resources, and confused by the seemingly endless torrents of information available to them. Much as today's college students lug laptops to the library in their backpacks, Eco's students lugged their files of index cards. Today's students carry access to boundless information that Eco's students could not have begun to fathom, but Eco's students owned every word they carried. They meticulously curated every byte of information, and they enjoyed the profound rewards of both the process and the product.¹

Every time you use a fact or idea from your research, remember to introduce it, use it by ***quoting, paraphrasing or summarizing*** with citation, and then explain what it means and how it relates to your topic. Below are examples of each strategy using this passage and framing sentences.

PLEASE NOTE: We have made the quote, paraphrase and summary ***bold*** and set them off with a * before and after so that they are easier to pick up; in your work they should be in normal text with no stars.

1. Umberto Eco. "Translators' Foreword," *How to Write a Thesis*, translated by Catarina Mongiat Farina and Geoff Farina, MIT Press, 2015, First published in Italian in 1977, xvii-xviii.

Quoting the passage with APA style citation

Eco, U. (1977). Translators' foreword. *How to Write a Thesis*, (C. Mongiat Farina & G. Farina, Trans.) Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

Using a source well is an art, and begins with strong research. ***As the 21st century translators of Umberto Eco's manual remark, "Today's students carry access to boundless information that Eco's students could not have begun to fathom, but Eco's students owned every word they carried" (2015, p. xvii-xviii).*** Understanding the bibliographic details of a source is essential to using it effectively.

Paraphrasing the passage with ASA style citation

Eco, Umberto. 1977. "Translators' Foreword." Pp. xv—xviii in *How to Write a Thesis*, translated by C. Mongiat Farina, and G. Farina, Cambridge: MIT Press.

Using a source well is an art, and begins with strong research. ***Students can access almost any source from anywhere nearly immediately but it is equally easy to lose a sense of where ideas came from and how they relate to each other. Researchers who had to carefully write out entries before the era of citation machines had a much deeper sense of their nature (Eco 2015: xvii-xviii).*** Understanding the bibliographic details of a source is essential to using it effectively.

Summarizing the passage with MLA style citation

Eco, Umberto. *How to Write a Thesis*. translated by Catarina Mongiat Farina, and Geoff Farina, with a foreword by Francesco Erspamer, MIT Press, 2015, first published in Italian in 1977.

Using a source well is an art, and begins with strong research. ***The translators of Umberto Eco's useful manual remark on the paradoxical relevance of research advice from the previous century. Students now can access almost any source from anywhere nearly immediately but can lose a sense of where ideas came from and how they relate to each other. They emphasize how the systems set out in the book instill fundamental academic virtues and can aid in not only managing but also owning the process and the product of research.*** Understanding the bibliographic details of a source is essential to using it effectively.