Quote, Paraphrase, Summarize

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Writers must 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 present the original source accurately. Signal phrases and citations attribute the words or ideas to the original author. A signal phrase refers to naming the author in the sentence. Citations provide basic bibliographic details in a footnote, endnote, or parentheses at the end of a sentence (Author, Year, Page Number).

## **What is the difference?**

**Quotes** bring a source directly to your writing by using the exact wording of the original. Use quotation marks at the beginning and end of the passage. In-text citations are placed at the end of the sentence after the ending quotation mark but before the period, “like this” (Author, Year, Page Number). Introduce block quotes as part of a sentence by using a colon:

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

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

**Summaries** are a form of paraphrasing focused on the main ideas of an entire source. Incorporate brief summaries to provide background or credibility in an essay. Students and scholars also use summaries in annotated bibliographies and literature reviews.

# **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
* The 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
* To summarize whole articles, books, movies, or websites

# **Sample Passage with a Chicago Style Footnote**

Obviously, the card catalog of a 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

1. Umberto Eco. “Translators’ Foreword” in *How to Write a Thesis*, trans. Catarina Mongiat Farina and Geoff Farina (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

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

**PLEASE NOTE:** We have made the quote, paraphrase, or summary in each example **bold** with stars (\*) at the beginning and end so that they are easier to find; however, in your work, they should be in normal text.

# **Quoting the passage with an APA style citation**

Eco, U. (2015). *How to Write a Thesis.* (C. Mongiat Farina & G. Farina, Trans.) MIT Press.

Using a source well is an art and it begins with strong research. \***As the 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, pp. xvii-xviii).\*** Understanding the bibliographic details of a source is essential to using it effectively.

# **Paraphrasing the passage with an ASA style citation**

Eco, Umberto. 2015. *How to Write a Thesis.* Translated by C. Mongiat Farina & G. Farina. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Using a source well is an art and begins with strong research. \***Students can now have almost immediate access to any source from anywhere in the world, 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 an MLA style citation**

Eco, Umberto. *How to Write a Thesis*. Translated by Caterina Mongiat Farina and Geoff Farina, MIT Press, 2015.

Using a source well is an art and begins with strong research. \***The translators of Umberto Eco’s manual remark on the paradoxical relevance of research advice from the previous century. Students now have almost immediate access to any source from anywhere in the world, but they can also 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.