

Using Source Material

Using sources when writing an essay often helps make the paper stronger, clearer, or more convincing than an essay based only on your own thoughts. The trick is knowing how to use the material you choose most effectively and how to give proper credit to the author of the source. Use source material to provide proof or support for your arguments or ideas, to define or clarify points or examples, or to provide a point of view or argument different from your own and to refute opposing ideas. You may paraphrase, summarize, or quote directly from a source.

1. Paraphrase: restate source material in your own words.
2. Summarize: condense the main points of your source as you restate them in your own words to make the main idea clear but using fewer words.
3. Quote directly: use the exact words of the source material.

All of these methods must be clearly documented to identify the source for any idea that is not your entirely your own. Cite the sources when you use an idea, significant word, or group of words not originating from your own thoughts and ideas. Use the citation method appropriate to your discipline, such as MLA in English or APA in psychology. Any material from sources that is not cited in your paper is considered plagiarized.

- How Not to Plagiarize has some guidelines
<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Integrating material from sources into your essay

Use summary and paraphrase as well as direct quotation in your essay. Choose quotations carefully to avoid using too many, especially long ones and do not substitute quotations for your own ideas. Often a few words or a single sentence is more effective than a long quotation because shorter phrases allow you to incorporate source material into your own ideas.

Do not use source material to repeat ideas you have already stated in your own words. For example: The Olympian gods valued order and beauty: "The gods of Olympus loved order and beauty in their sacrifices and their temples" (Hamilton 57). Instead, use the source to back up or explain what you have already said:

The frenzied, bloody Bacchantes were very different from the Olympian gods who "loved order and beauty in their sacrifices and their temples" (Hamilton 57).

Use verbs such as *agree, note, state, suggest, dispute, or refute* to introduce summary, paraphrase, and quotation in order to integrate the source material smoothly. For example,

Economic collapse appears to be a main factor in the ending of the Cold War, but Haley asserts that "economics are insignificant next to ideological changes" (203).

Avoid leaving the quotation hanging or floating in a sentence by itself. Instead, incorporate the quotation into the body of your sentence in one of three ways.

1. Paraphrase part of the idea and quote only part of a sentence directly.

Not only did the gods enjoy beauty on Olympus, but also "the deities were exceedingly humanly attractive" on earth (Hamilton 17).

2. Introduce the quotation by telling whose idea you are quoting.

Edith Hamilton writes, "The deities were exceedingly humanly attractive (17)."

3. Introduce the quotation by a sentence explaining it.

Edith Hamilton commented on the human qualities of the gods on Olympus: "The deities were exceedingly humanly attractive" (17)."

Hodges' Harbrace Handbook (14th ed., 578-79) lists source material that needs to be cited.

- writings, both published and unpublished, that are paraphrased, summarized, or quoted in your essay
- opinions and judgments not your own
- statistics and facts that are not widely known
- images and graphics such as works of art, drawings, tables and charts, graphs, maps,
- advertisements, photographs, music
- personal communication such as interviews, letters, and e-mail
- electronic media: TV and radio broadcasts, films and videos, recordings, Web sites, discussion lists

Some fine points of using quotations in MLA style

Even two or three words directly from the source must be in quotation marks and cited: The monster Chimaera was said to have breath like the "flame unquenchable" (Hamilton 137).

Keep punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in the quotation exactly the same as in the source material or use ellipsis and brackets for minor changes: Jane Austen's character never thought that she would "quit that humble Cottage for the Deceitfull Pleasures of the World" (Austen 331).

Make it clear when a quotation has to be changed to fit your essay. To omit part of a sentence you are quoting, use ellipsis points, three spaced periods:

Wordsworth's poem "My Heart Leaps Up" may have originated from his sister's journal entry in which she says, "I never saw daffodils so beautiful . . . ever glancing ever changing" (324).

To show omitted sentences in a quotation, use an ellipsis with another period between the sentences:

Abigail Adams wrote her husband, requesting that he "Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them. . . . Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands" (231).

To change a word in the quotation for clarity or tense, use square brackets []:

"She [Carla] hit the cat."

Ronnie drops the pickle jar and "green juice [spatters] everywhere."

If the quotation is longer than four lines, begin the quoted section on a new line; indent ten spaces or one inch, double-space, and do not use quotation marks; include documentation in parentheses at the end of the last quoted line. Put the end punctuation after the last word of the quotation, not after the parentheses. (See the *MLA Handbook* in the Writing Center for examples.)

Examples of paraphrase, summary, and direct quotation using a paragraph from Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*, 1942 ed.:

Original Source: People often speak of "the Greek miracle." What the phrase tries to express is the new birth of the world with the awakening of Greece. 'Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.' Something like that happened in Greece. Why it happened, or when, we have no idea at all. We know only that in the earliest Greek poets a new point of view dawned, never dreamed of in the world before them, but never to leave the world after them. With the coming forward of Greece, mankind became the center of the universe, the most important thing in it. This was a revolution in thought. Human beings had counted little heretofore. In Greece man first realized what mankind was (Hamilton 14-16).

Paraphrase: No one quite understands what happened when Greece established herself, but clearly the new Greek world had changed in all significant ways from the world that had preceded it. Poets began to see the world and express it differently in their art. Their literary forefathers would not have recognized them, but the new Greeks embodied an approach to life and to art that became fundamental to the development of subsequent ages. Formerly, man as a being had little importance in the world; now, however, the Greeks recognized themselves as a group, as mankind. Far from being peripheral in the universal scheme, man became the center of all things, and this revolutionary approach has been forever credited to the Greeks (Hamilton 14-16).

Summary: People have tried to understand how the Greeks arrived as such a radically new thesis as the importance of man in the universe, for certainly before the rise of the Greek world no one thought of themselves as members of any group called mankind. When or how the Greek phase of history began may not be clear, but certainly the poets of the time express a new concept of art and humanity that remains central to our contemporary world (Hamilton 14-16).

Direct quotation: One of the major contributions of the Greek world is their concept of man's importance, an idea "never dreamed of in the world before them, but never to leave the world after them" (Hamilton 16).

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