

Summarizing and Paraphrasing Sources

A **summary** captures the gist of the information taken from a source, reducing it to a few words or sentences. A **paraphrase**, which is usually longer than a summary, is more faithful to the structure of the source, and lists major and minor points in the original order that they were presented.

When to summarize, paraphrase or quote directly

1. Summarize any material that supports your thesis but does not provide any new information.
2. Paraphrase any information that will be very important to your paper, either for the facts it provides or the ideas it offers.
3. Use direct quotations for any information that is essential to your paper and whose point may not be as clear if not repeated word for word.

Summarizing

When summarizing a source, identify the main ideas and put them in your own words. If the article is long, begin by looking for the topic sentence of each paragraph, or cluster together all the paragraphs that seem to be related. Then assemble these ideas into brief but coherent statement.

Summaries are designed to allow you to present the gist of any bit of information without using the writer's language directly.

Paraphrasing

When paraphrasing, put the information into your own words so that you understand the overall idea. In preparing a paraphrase, be sure that

- ✓ The material is written completely in your own words, except for clearly marked quotations.
- ✓ The material is arranged in a way to highlight the most important information.
- ✓ Each important fact is accompanied by a specific page number from the original source.
- ✓ The material you use is relevant to the theme of your paper. Never waste time paraphrasing material that is of no use to you.