

# Using Citations and Plagiarism

It is essential that every student understand the standards of academic honesty and how to avoid dishonesty by proper acknowledgment of intellectual indebtedness. As the student develops his own work, drawing on the ideas of others is an essential and exciting component of intellectual work. Whenever the student uses other writers' ideas, however, s/he must acknowledge the sources.

As a student, provide citations whenever you use:

- direct quotations
- paraphrases and summaries
- borrowed ideas
- facts that are not common knowledge

## QUOTATIONS

Use quotation marks and a citation when you use another writer's exact words ***even when using only a short phrase***. You must make clear to the reader which words are your own and which are another writer's. For direct quotations, citations alone are NOT sufficient; you must enclose the quoted material in quotation marks. When used judiciously, quotations serve a number of important functions in a well-crafted paper.

Select quotations that

- develop a step in your argument
- present striking, memorable phrasing
- provide a strong, specific example
- introduce a claim open to interpretation
- summarize an author's main points

When selecting quotations, avoid

- quoting details
- padding a thin argument with unnecessary quotations
- quoting commonly known information, e.g., "Ataturk died on November 9, 1938."
- quoting blocks of text that could be summarized or quoted more selectively
- quoting information you could state in your own words

## PARAPHRASES

Paraphrasing is the rewriting of an author's idea in your own words. Paraphrase rather than quote when you want to present an author's idea but the exact language is not significant. When you paraphrase, ***you must cite the source***. You also must ***fully rewrite*** the original language and original sentence structure. A common mistake is partial paraphrasing. Do not keep the author's exact wording or the same sentence structure. If you retain even a *short phrase* or a *distinctive word*, ***use quotation marks***.

Incorrect and correct examples of paraphrasing:

Original text

Descartes introduces the possibility that the world is controlled by a malicious demon who has employed all his energies to deceive him (Lu 24).

Incorrect paraphrase

Descartes suggests that the world is controlled by an evil demon who may be using his energies to deceive (Lu 24).

Comment: Plagiarism: even though the citation is provided, the sentence still has exact wording (italicized).

Correct paraphrase

Descartes suggests that the evil power who rules the world may be attempting to mislead him (Lu 24).

Comment: Not plagiarism: the language is fully rewritten, and a citation is provided.

Combination of paraphrase and quotation

Descartes suggests that the evil power who rules the world may be using “all his energies to deceive him” (Lu 24).

Comment: Not plagiarism: the paraphrased portion is fully rewritten, the exact language is quoted, and a citation is provided.

When paraphrasing, you must rewrite the original language, change the original sentence structure, and cite the source according to the expectations of the discipline.

### **BORROWED IDEAS**

Acknowledge sources from which you borrow ideas even when you don't directly quote the text. Borrowed ideas come in many forms, including original concepts, observations, data, and logic. Include a citation when you use

- another author's tables, maps, or graphs
- another author's data, even if using the data for a different argument
- the organization or logic of another author's argument

These guidelines include the use of reference materials such as encyclopedias and study aids.

### **COMMON KNOWLEDGE**

You do not need to cite an idea that is standard information of the discipline, such as material discussed in class or general information your reader knows or can locate easily (e.g., momentum equals mass times velocity, or Daniel Moi became president of Kenya in 1978). Such information is widely available and not disputed.

You do need to cite a fact that is not common knowledge, e.g., “Moi's election came after a heated succession struggle that allegedly included an assassination plot against Moi himself” (Karimi and Ochieng 1980: 109).

Beware of over-citing, which is usually the result of unnecessary citing of general knowledge or excessive reliance on source material. Remember to check with your instructor if you are unsure whether to cite information.

### **INTEGRATING SOURCE MATERIAL**

When introducing source material, avoid using a weak lead-in verb, e.g., “the author *says*”; instead, select a verb that conveys the author's attitude toward the material, e.g., “the author *questions*” Aim to integrate source material into your own argument; explain to your reader *how* the source material contributes to your analysis. Be sure to smoothly integrate the quotation into the surrounding language, matching the syntax of the quotation to the syntax of the surrounding statement.

After you have presented the quotation or paraphrase, tie it your argument. Explain to your reader why the idea is significant in the context of your ideas.