

Ways to Use and Present Evidence: Summarize, Paraphrase, and Quote

Choose evidence that supports, challenges, and extends your argument. Then, decide the best format for that material within the structure of your paper and acknowledge the original author or source.

Three Ways to Format Evidence

1. Summarizing is presenting information from others in your own words and in a more concise way. Summaries present an author's overall argument rather than explaining each element of the argument. Furthermore, a summary must at once be true to what the original author says while at the same time emphasizing those aspects of what the author says that are relevant to your paper. When including a summary in your paper, you must cite your source with in-text citation. Introduce summaries with vivid and precise signal words and phrases.

When you want to discuss or refer to an entire source, write a summary. For example, if you need to say whether you agree or disagree with an author's argument, you may need to include a few sentences summarizing his or her work in the introduction or include a summary paragraph immediately after your introduction.

2. A paraphrase is a more detailed restatement than a summary that focuses concisely on a single main idea. When you paraphrase a passage, you translate its key terms into near synonyms, creating a parallel statement. Each sentence in your paraphrase does not need to correspond exactly to one sentence in the original source: one of your paraphrased sentences may include information from multiple sentences in the original source. Always attribute your paraphrases to the source material with in-text citation.

When you want to discuss, challenge, extend, or corroborate a single claim or concept, write a paraphrase. For example, if the president launches a program for three reasons, and you want to discuss just one of the reasons, paraphrase it after your claim statement in a body paragraph. Or, if you want to show readers different opinions about the program in the introduction, paraphrase one side's view.

Follow this step-by-step guide for paraphrasing:

1. Read the original passage at least twice to ensure you understand its full meaning.
2. Underline key concepts, and make a list of ideas you want to include in your paper. To avoid plagiarism, do not copy the author's words exactly. Restate the information in your own words.
3. Think of ways to vary the original passage's sentence structure.
4. Set the original aside, and write your paraphrase.
5. Revisit the original passage and ensure that the original's meaning has not changed.

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3. Quoting is presenting the *exact* words an author uses within quotation

marks. Oftentimes, paraphrasing is preferable to quoting because paraphrasing ideas from your sources shows that you understand the material. However, quoting is useful in the following cases:

- Language is especially vivid or expressive
- Exact wording is needed for technical accuracy
- The words debaters of an issue choose to explain their positions are important
- The exact words of an important authority lend weight to an argument
- The language of a source is the topic of your discussion (as in an analysis or interpretation)

When you want the reader to understand specific details or a particular tone, quote the original. Use direct quotations to add impact and depth. If you quote too often, the information in the quotes will not seem as strong. Usually, a blend of summary, paraphrase, and quotations varies—thus, strengthens—the power of source material.

How to Present Evidence

For all summaries, paraphrases, and quotations, provide attribution for the original source. Use a signal phrase, briefly reference background information, and provide any other context necessary to understand the evidence or its value.

I. Include only information that gives your source authority:

- ✓ Author's name
- ✓ Author's qualification/relationship to the evidence (biologist, doctor, sociologist, etc.)

What should you *not* include?

- ✓ Date of publication
 - Unless you are writing a literature review or an APA-style paper in which the date is included in in-text citation, you do not need to include the date of publication.
- ✓ The source's job is usually unnecessary information.
- ✓ Book or article title
 - Titles are usually distracting for your readers. They are more interested in what your source has to say.

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Incorrect example: In his book, *Art Nouveau: 1890-1914*, written in 2000, art historian and director of the Sainsbury Center for Visual Art at the University of East Anglia, Paul Greenhalgh says, “Many Art Nouveau pattern-forms are a result of nature being coaxed into artifice” (Greenhalgh 61).

The above attribution is TOO LONG! Preserve only the information that will help **give your source authority**.

Correct example: Art historian Paul Greenhalgh **says**, “Many Art Nouveau pattern-forms are a result of nature being coaxed into artifice” (Greenhalgh 61).

II. Work the verb

Use a powerful and descriptive verb to illustrate the relationship between the source and the evidence.

Art historian Paul Greenhalgh **says**, “Many Art Nouveau pattern-forms are a result of nature being coaxed into artifice” (Greenhalgh 61).

In this case, “says” is a weak verb that does not effectively illustrate what Paul Greenhalgh is *doing*.

Art historian Paul Greenhalgh **suggests**, “Many Art Nouveau pattern-forms are a result of nature being coaxed into artifice” (Greenhalgh 61).

Here are some active verbs to help you present evidence with precision. For a more complete list of helpful verbs, see A Writer’s Word Bank.

Verbs for showing claims	Verbs for expressing agreement	Verbs for questioning or disagreeing	Verbs for making recommendations
argues insists believes asserts claims emphasizes observes suggests	acknowledges verifies agrees concur corroborates endorses extols praise	complains complicates repudiates contradicts denies disavows questions refutes	advocates calls for demands encourages exhorts implores recommends urges