Chapter 2

Summarizing, Paraphrasing and Quoting

In this text, you are learning how to use researched material to explain a point or support a contention. You will present your researched information in your paper in one of three formats: as a summary, as a paraphrase, or as a quotation. Sometimes when you try to include outside sources in an essay, the paper sounds as though it was copied directly from an encyclopedia or from a choppy series of sources. This problem can be avoided if you understand how to put researched information in your own words and how to select specific details to quote directly. Chapter 2 will help you master the skills of summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting.

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Objectives

- define the concepts of summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting;
- explain the use of all three formats in a research paper;
- identify the common mistakes to avoid.

Summarizing

In a research paper, you are using information from other sources to support or add credence to your points or assertions. Most of the time you will present that information in the form of a summary. When you summarize a passage, you are stating the main ideas of that passage and eliminating most of the detail. Whether you summarize a sentence, a paragraph, several paragraphs, a page, or several pages, you are always following the same process: you are condensing or shortening the material to its key points.

Before you begin to write a summary, you first need to read the entire passage carefully. After getting an understanding of the whole passage, you should reread the passage, looking for all the key points. If the passage is an essay or several paragraphs, you are looking for the thesis or main idea and the sentences that support it. If the passage is a single paragraph, you are looking for the topic sentence and the sub-topic ideas. Remember you are not concentrating on the specific details in a summary. You may want to highlight the key ideas in the passage you are reading if you can. If not, then write down these key ideas on a sheet of paper. Once you have determined the key points of the passage, you are ready to write your summary. Referring to the ideas you highlighted or wrote on the sheet of paper, express these ideas in your own words. Do not use the exact wording from the original passage in your summary.

Mistakes to Avoid When Writing a Summary

- Adding too much detail that distracts from the key points you are trying to make.
- Using the exact words from the original passage and not quoting them.

Let's say for a history class you are writing a research paper on the establishment of a Jewish homeland after World War Two. For your paper, you might want to summarize the following paragraphs from the *Eleanor: The Years Alone* by Joseph Lash.

> In Palestine, the British rejection of the joint commission's recommendations turned the desperate Jewish settlers toward acts of terrorism against the British forces and illegal immigration organized by the Jewish defense force, the Haganah. Bridges were blown up and British officers kidnapped. There were pitched battles between British and Jewish troops. The British, with 50,000 troops in Palestine, decided on some drastic action. The Zionist leaders were jailed. That strengthened the influences of the terrorists. The King David Hotel, headquarters of the mandatory and the British Army, was blown up with forty-three killed and forty-three injured.

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Your summary of this paragraph might read as follows:

> After the British repudiated the commission's proposals, terrorist acts by Jewish occupants and armed conflict between British and Jewish forces occurred in Palestine. In retaliation for the imprisoning of Zionist leaders by the British, Jewish extremists bombed the British Army headquarters, the King David Hotel, killing and injuring many.

The type of summary we have been discussing up to this point is the type you use as a part of a larger work. The summary is used to support other information. There are times, though, when you may be required to write a stand-alone summary. Two types of summaries that fall into this category are the abstract or *précis* and the annotated bibliography.

An abstract, also called a précis, is a summary of an entire text, whether it is an article or a book. Because you are summarizing an entire text in this instance, the length of an abstract is longer than the type of summary we previously discussed. You are highlighting for your reader the main premise of the text and the key topics covered in that text. You are letting your reader know the major points being made. As mentioned previously, make sure you express all the points in your own words. Keep the major points in the same order as they appear in the original work. Also, keep your ideas in the same proportions as the original. For example, if there are three main points in the article you are summarizing and the author devotes approximately one-third of his article to each, you should devote approximately one-third of your summary to each point. Begin an abstract by identifying the source, giving the author, title, and publication date of the work. Also, mention the type of source it is, such as a book, article, movie, or play. For example, the beginning of an abstract might read: "John Horgan in his March 2013 *National Geographic* article "The drones come home" discusses...." After reading your abstract, the reader should have a good understanding of what is being discussed in the text by the author and what the author's main contentions are without having to read the original text.

A bibliography is a listing of references. An annotated bibliography is a listing of references that includes a brief summary of the text listed. The annotated bibliography gives your reader an overview of the main premise of the text and the key topics. It generally does not go into as much detail as the abstract or précis. Chapter 7 discusses the development and use of a bibliography in greater detail.

Many times a professor will ask you to compile an annotated bibliography on a topic. This assignment provides you and your reader with a handy resource. You will remember, and your reader will know, if a particular source would be a valuable resource to consult when writing a paper on that topic. For example, here is an abstract of the John Horgan article from the *National Geographic* of March 2013 as it is presented in the *Academic Search Complete* database:

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The article looks at potential non-military applications for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also known as *drones*, following the approval of their use in domestic airspace by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) by September 30, 2015. Possible UAV uses include police surveillance, crop monitoring, and traffic control. Other topics include research into *drone* navigation systems, miniature UAVs which mimic birds or insects, and terrorism, safety, and privacy concerns.

Paraphrasing

When you paraphrase, you take someone else's ideas and put them into your own words. Unlike a summary, a paraphrase conveys all the ideas of the original passage. You may change the order of the ideas from the original, but you do not omit any of the points or details. Consequently, your paraphrase of a passage will be approximately the same length as the original.

Before you begin to write a paraphrase, first make sure you understand the meaning of the original passage. Read the original passage carefully and thoroughly. If there are any words you do not understand, make sure you look up the words in a dictionary. If you are having trouble interpreting the original passage, ask your instructor, a family member, or a friend to help you clarify your understanding. You will not be able to write a clear and accurate paraphrase if there is any part of the original passage you do not understand.

After you are sure you understand the original passage, you are ready to write your paraphrase. To make sure you do not mimic the wording of the original passage too closely, put the passage aside that you are paraphrasing and do not look at it as you write. After you have put together your first draft, then refer to the original passage to see if there are any points or details that you have omitted. If you cannot think of a synonymous word for a word in the original passage, you may want to refer to a thesaurus. However, be very careful when using a thesaurus so that you do not select a word that changes the original connotation of the passage.

As you are writing your passage, make sure you use your own writing style. Use the sentence patterns that you traditionally use when you write. Don't change your style to match the style of the original passage. Too often trying to imitate the style of the original author results in a stilted and awkward paraphrase that is not clear to the reader. Choose words that are comfortable for your vocabulary.

Remember you can change the order of the ideas from the original passage. You may combine points or separate points from how they appear in the original. Re-ordering ideas will change the writing style of the original author's to your own. Just do not leave out any of the points or details from the original passage in your paraphrase.

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Mistakes to Avoid When Writing a Paraphrase

- Misinterpreting the original passage
- Keeping the wording of the paraphrase too much like the original
- Keeping the writing style of the paraphrase too much like the original
- Writing an unclear or awkward paraphrase
- Using similar words in your paraphrase to the wording in the original passage that do not have the correct connotation of the original
- Omitting ideas or details from the original passage
- Inadequately documenting the paraphrase

For an art paper on Dadaism, you might want to paraphrase to the following two sentences from the *History of Art*:

> It is hardly surprising that the mechanized mass killing of the First World War should have driven Duchamp to despair. Together with a number of others who shared his attitude, he launched in protest a movement called Dada (or Dadaism).

Your paraphrase of these sentences might read this way:

> Duchamp was predictably despondent over the "mechanized" atrocities of World War I. Consequently in reaction to these horrors, he, with several like-minded colleagues, began the art movement known as Dada, also named Dadaism.

Please note that the word *mechanized* is in quotation marks to indicate that it was used in the original passage. Because of the importance of the word in association with World War I and the growth of Dadaism, it is used as is in the paraphrased version.

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Quoting

You will find that there are times you will want to use researched material in its original wording. You do not want to condense the information, nor do you want to present it in your own words. In these cases, you will quote directly from the original passage. There are three primary reasons for presenting researched information as a direct quotation:

1. You want the direct words of an authority to support your contention to add credibility to your position.
2. The impact of the original passage will be diminished if you use your own words.

3. You really cannot think of another way to reword the passage.

When quoting, you will want to be familiar with three different punctuation marks that will simplify and add clarity to your direct quotations.

Ellipsis marks

The ellipsis marks are three dots that work together as a unit to indicate that you have omitted words from the original passage when you quoted. The three dots represent the location of the omitted words. Words are omitted in a case of parenthetical ideas or unnecessary detail to the main idea you want to quote. When the omitted material comes at the end of a quoted statement, use four dots, with the fourth one serving as the period at the end of the sentence.

For example, take this sentence from an article from the *AARP Bulletin* of April 2014 dealing with tax delinquency and senior citizens:

> Although most foreclosures are triggered by homeowners falling behind on their mortgage payments, the number of foreclosures tied to delinquent tax payments is rising, according to the National Consumer Law Center, a nonprofit advocacy group.

Depending on how you used this sentence as a direct quotation in your paper, it could look as follows:

> "…the number of foreclosures tied to delinquent tax payments is rising, according to the National Consumer Law Center, a nonprofit advocacy group."
>
> or
>
> "Although most foreclosures are triggered by homeowners falling behind on their mortgage payments, the number of foreclosures tied to delinquent tax payments is rising…."

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Brackets

Brackets are used when you want to add your own words to a quotation to help with clarification or to make a comment.

Generally you use brackets to explain the reference of a pronoun found in the quoted material or to clarify an idea being discussed that might have been lost because of omitted words.

For example, instead of writing a summary of the passage taken from *Eleanor: The Years Alone,* you wanted to take the first line as a quotation. It would look like this:

> "In Palestine, the British rejection of the joint commission's [the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry] recommendations turned

> the desperate Jewish settlers toward acts of terrorism against the British forces and illegal immigration organized by the Jewish defense force, the Haganah."

The brackets are used to identify the joint commission that is referenced.

Single Quotation Marks

Single quotation marks are used when quoted material already appears in the passage you want to quote. In this situation, you convert the quotation marks in the original passage to single quotation marks. For example, you want to use the following sentence from the *History of Art* as a quotation in your paper:

> Picasso's *Three Musicians* shows this "cut-paper style" so consistently that we cannot tell from the reproduction whether it is painted or pasted.

As presented in your paper, the quotation would appear as follows:

> "Picasso's *Three Musicians* shows this 'cut-paper style' so consistently that we cannot tell from the reproduction whether it is painted or pasted."

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Mistakes to Avoid When Quoting

- Quoting a passage incorrectly
- Changing any of the original wording in a passage, including spelling and grammar errors
- Leaving out words, causing the meaning of the original passage to change
- Taking the quotation out of context and thus changing the meaning
- Inserting your own words in a quotation without using brackets
- Not using single quotation marks around quoted material in the original passage

▼ Using Summary, Paraphrase, and Quotation in a Paper

When you write a research paper, you use summaries, paraphrases, and quotations to help clarify a point, support an assertion, and verify a contention. For your research paper to be effective, you want the researched information to blend in smoothly with your own ideas. To achieve this coherence, first present the point you are trying to make and any explanation needed. Then, include your researched information as support, no matter what format or what combination of formats you use. After including

your researched material, comment on that information to explain how it substantiates your point.

When you include the researched information in your paper, make sure you adequately document this information. You do not want your reader to think that the information is from your own knowledge or experience if you are getting it from another source. You need to tell your reader who originally wrote or said the information, who this person is, and where you found the information. Such documentation will prevent you from committing *plagiarism*, the stealing of someone else's ideas. Chapter 6 will explain how to present documented information in your essay.

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