

Quoting and paraphrasing

One of the primary features of academic writing is using books, journal articles, websites, and other outside sources ('the literature') to support your ideas. This requires you to read widely in order to understand the different sides of a debate within a particular field of inquiry.

Your writing should demonstrate how and where you have drawn on the literature in support of your point. You must also ensure that your writing connects with the literature. The best assignments move fluidly between the outside evidence and your own interpretations, explanations, and evaluations. The sources are integrated within the assignment. Explaining the ideas of authors in your own words shows that you understand the concepts and opinions of those authors. It takes skill to alter the form of information without changing the meaning of that information but is a skill well worth developing. There are three main methods for incorporating the ideas and research of other authors into your document:

- **quoting:** copying the source information word for word.
- **paraphrasing:** putting the source information into other words and phrases.
- **summarising:** creating a shortened version of the source information.

Whenever you use an outside source – whether you have quoted it directly, paraphrased it, or summarised it – you must always do two things:

- connect it with writing around it, and
- credit the original author.

Quoting

A quotation is an exact copy of the words that someone else has written or said. These words are placed within quotation marks (also known as speech marks: “ ”) to indicate that it is a direct quotation and not a summary or paraphrase.

Quotations should be used **sparingly and selectively**. While quotations indicate to the marker that you have read the literature and have identified points of interest, quotations can distract from your own writing. You are far better off to demonstrate to the marker your understanding of the author's words, rather than relying on the words of others. A quotation does not automatically demonstrate that you fully understand what you are quoting; it only shows that you can find a (maybe) relevant quotation, and that you can copy and paste.

Nevertheless, sometimes quotations will be the best option:

- Does the quotation express an important idea in a way that you could not write more simply in your own words?
- Does the quotation express an important idea in an authoritative way that you could not write more dramatically or powerfully?

- Is the exact wording necessary for a particular purpose, such as definitions, technical or specialised terms, literary analysis, or legislation and legal documents?

As a general guide, four quotations are a sufficient number for an average 2000-word assignment. This allows enough space for your understanding to shine through beyond the words of others.

Paraphrasing techniques

Paraphrasing means to rewrite information using different words and phrases.

- Restate whole sentences. Don't just replace individual words with synonyms (words meaning the same thing)- this is still plagiarism.
- Restructure the sentence. This could mean reversing the order in which items are listed.
- Embed the author's name in the paraphrase: "Leyden (1985) states that ..."
- Link ideas differently, with signposting and linking words such as "therefore," "although," and "accordingly."
- Expand on what the author is saying with your own knowledge and understanding.

Some words and phrases are recognised terms used within a field; they are not specific to an individual author. Such terminology and technical concepts should not be changed. If the terminology is generally known in the field, you do not need to put it in quotation marks, but if you are not sure use quotation marks.

Summarising techniques

Summarising involves selecting some key features and then using those to create (in your own words) a shortened version of the author's text. You need to make sure there is enough difference between the original version and your own summarised version. This may be achieved by simplifying the ideas, as well as using a different sentence structure or sentence order to present those ideas.

- Identify keywords and link these with other words to create a different combination.
- Be selective about the specific ideas you choose to include, while leaving out others that are less useful.
- Reorder the ideas in your own framework. By doing so, you are creating distinction between your version and the author's.
- You can sometimes include several authors making similar points in one sentence, summarising them all together.

All this can be achieved without significantly altering the meaning of the information. Many of these techniques can also be applied to the strategy of paraphrasing.

Academic writing and study skills support

1. Academic Q+A

If you have a quick question about study skills or academic writing, then they can ask it on the [Academic Q+A forum](#), which can be accessed via the [Academic Support Stream site](#).

2. Consultations

One-to-one consultations with learning advisors and writing consultants are [available online and on campus](#). Consultants can answer your questions about academic writing and study skills or give you feedback on your assignment's structure, focus, paragraph structure, flow, presentation, use of sources, and referencing.

3. Online Writing and Learning Link (OWLL)

Develop your academic writing and study skills with the [Online Writing and Learning Link \(OWLL\)](#) website from Massey University. OWLL includes information on assignment writing, assignment types, referencing, study skills, and exam skills.

4. Pre-reading Service

The [Pre-reading Service](#) is a free service, which gives students an opportunity to send their draft assignment to [CLS consultants](#) for review and advice. Students receive individual written feedback on their assignment's structure, focus, paragraph structure, flow, style, presentation, referencing, and use of sources. The service can be accessed via the [Academic Support Stream site](#).

5. Workshops

Free study seminars and workshops are run on campus and online. See [Workshops page on OWLL](#) for [programmes and registration details](#).