

Avoiding Plagiarism: Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Citing

When writing a paper, you should always let the reader know where you get your information. This is important because it lets the reader check your sources and gives credit to the original author(s). When you do not give proper credit, this is called plagiarism. Plagiarism isn't just taking someone's ideas; it can also be using large portions of text that are not your own. Even if you change some of the words, this can still be plagiarism. The point of writing a paper is to synthesize information and present something from your own perspective based on the sources you read—not to present someone else's work. This handout will go over the standard ways to give credit to an author: quoting, paraphrasing, and citing.

Quoting

The simplest way to reference an author's work is with a quote. This is when you take a direct sentence from a source, put it in quotation marks, and give it a citation. You generally should not quote more than a sentence or two because it is not a good way to synthesize information. Quotes are best used to say something that is hard to put in your own words. Some good times to use a quote are when sharing an author's personal experience, highlighting an important point, talking about a specific argument, or explaining a concept that's highly technical. Below is an example.

Quote Example

Glue is a complicated material to invent. According to researchers, "Capacity for multilevel operations, abstract thought, and mental rotation are all required for the process of compound adhesive manufacture" (Wadley et al.).

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is the other way to reference someone else's work. This is when you put relevant information into your own words. Oftentimes, this is the best way to share factual information and complicated ideas. Your paper should paraphrase much more than it quotes.

When you paraphrase, do not just replace words in the text with similar words. Change the whole structure of the sentences and organize the information as needed to fit your paper. Below is an example of what *not* to do when paraphrasing.

Sample Text

Little information exists on the environmental and economic effects of free-roaming and feral dogs, potentially hampering the efficacy of conservation initiatives. Few studies have focused on population-level impacts to endemic species associated with wildlife-dog interactions. Of the studies that have focused on these issues, most have found that dogs negatively affect native species.

Bad Paraphrasing

Not much research is out on how the economy and environment are affected by free-roaming and feral dogs. This could harm conservation efficacy. Not many studies have looked at population-level effects on native species related to wildlife and dog interactions. A few studies have looked at it, and they found dogs have a negative impact.

You can see the actual text and the paraphrasing example above read similarly. In addition, the required citation is missing. The bad paraphrasing follows the same order of information, uses mostly similar sentence structures, and includes many of the same phrases.

Copying a paragraph and changing some of the words is not paraphrasing. To avoid this, it might be helpful to read your source, set it aside for a minute, and then type your paraphrase without looking at the original text. Try to take the relevant points from your source and present them in a way that works for your paper.

Good Paraphrasing

Wild dogs could potentially impact the economy and environment. There have not been many studies on the subject, but the few that were done suggest that they could pose a problem (Young 25).

Citing

Citations inform readers about the source of your quote or paraphrase. For each piece of information you use, you must cite it in the text of your essay and on the references page. There are two ways to cite in-text. You can talk about an author's work directly in the text, or you can give the source in parentheses after the cited material. In-text citations only tell some information about the source, but the references page will have more detail. The exact information given in both citations will be different depending on the formatting style of your essay (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.). The following examples use MLA formatting.

Parenthetical Citation

Wild dogs could potentially impact the economy and environment. There have not been many studies on the subject, but the few that were done suggest that they could pose a problem (Young 25).

In-Sentence Citation

Glue is a complicated material to create. According to Wadley et al., "Capacity for multilevel operations, abstract thought, and mental rotation are all required for the process of compound adhesive manufacture."

If you want more information on formatting, the Writing Center has separate handouts on MLA, APA, and other citation styles.

Activity

Below is an excerpt. Paraphrase it, cite it, and compare it to the samples. Remember, the goal is to write about the topic in your own words, so the samples will be different from the sentence you write.

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Scientists in northern Russia have discovered a huge walrus haulout on the shores of the Kara Sea where their habitat is under threat from shrinking ice and human activity.

The haulout, a place of refuge where walruses congregate, reproduce, and socialise, is located in a remote corner of Russia's Yamal peninsula, and scientists say they counted over 3,000 animals there last month.

Walrus haulouts have traditionally been located on drifting sea ice or on Arctic islands, scientists say. But warmer climate cycles mean sea ice is shrinking and habitats are under threat from oil and gas exploration and more Arctic shipping.

"This haulout is unique because there are both female and male walruses, as well as calves of different age," said Aleksander Sokolov, a senior Arctic researcher at Russia's Academy of Sciences who called the find a "unique open-air laboratory."

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) listed the species as "nearly threatened" in 2016, estimating the total number of adult Atlantic walruses in the world at 12,500.

~Maria Vasilyeva, "Russian Scientists Discover Huge Walrus Haulout in Arctic Circle," *Yahoo!*, November 6, 2020.

Sample Answers for Activity

Example 1: Recently, a group of 3000 walruses were discovered living together. Scientists say the group's diversity is rare and likely due to habitat destruction (Vasilyeva).

Example 2: According to journalist Maria Vasilyeva, Russian scientists found a large group of walruses on the Yamal peninsula. This group is unusually diverse due to habitat destruction.

References

- Purdue Writing Lab. "MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics // Purdue Writing Lab." *Purdue Writing Lab*, 2020, owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_in_text_citations_the_basics.html.
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- Wadley, L., et al. "Implications for Complex Cognition from the Hafting of Tools with Compound Adhesives in the Middle Stone Age, South Africa." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 106, no. 24, 2009, pp. 9590–9594., doi:10.1073/pnas.0900957106.
- Young, Julie K., et al. "Is Wildlife Going to the Dogs? Impacts of Feral and Free-Roaming Dogs on Wildlife Populations." *BioScience*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2011, pp. 125–132., doi:10.1525/bio.2011.61.2.7.