

## Using Sources

While writing your ethics paper and your formal report, you will use material you've researched from a variety of sources. Using this material responsibly, however, is an important skill to learn. Just like objects, words and ideas are owned by the person who created them. When we borrow words or ideas from their creator, we need to give the author adequate credit and to use his or her possessions with respect. We use two basic techniques to borrow words and ideas from another writer: quotation and summary.

### Quotation

Quotation is the practice of borrowing an author's words and, of course, the ideas that come along with them. The most important principle in quotation is to give proper attribution when you borrow an author's words. To quote appropriately, you must acknowledge the quotation with quotation marks around the author's words and a citation (whether footnote or parenthetical) to show where the quotation comes from. Using an author's words without quotation marks or without a citation can be construed as plagiarism-even if it's just a mistake.

A second important principle is to reproduce words in quotations exactly as they appear in the original--every word, every punctuation mark, even every mistake the source makes should be reproduced in the quotation. Otherwise, we'd be misrepresenting the author, putting words into his or her mouth.

However, certain practical considerations have led to techniques that let us make small acknowledged changes to an author's words:

**Brackets.** Writers use brackets to clarify the quotation for their readers. For instance, if the quotation uses a pronoun but doesn't include its antecedent (the person or thing it's replacing), you can include the antecedent in brackets after the pronoun:

Original: "It is the century's greatest challenge to the global community."

Quotation: "It [the AIDS crisis] is the century's greatest challenge to the global community" (Jones 382).

You can also change the grammatical form of a word-but not the word itself-in order to make a quotation mesh with your sentence. Be careful to put the brackets only around the word or part of the word you actually changed. For example, in the sentences below the writer changed the tense of the original verb "stops" in order to make it consistent with tense of the introductory clause:

Original: "Deming's method stops assembly lines."

Quotation: Critics discounted Deming's quality control ideas by saying that it "stop[ped] assembly lines" (Smith 27).

If the source makes a mistake, you can also use brackets to show that it's not your mistake by including in brackets the word sic (Latin for "thus"-in other words, "this is the way I found it"). Remember to insert the sic immediately after the error:

"Genetic diversity [sic] will make agricultural products less prone to disease" (Harris 92).

**Ellipsis.** Sometimes a writer includes material in the middle of a sentence that's really not important for your purposes. If the source's words are irrelevant you can leave them out and replace them with an ellipsis mark (three dots--...):

Original: "Point of sale inventory systems, which we use in all our stores, will revolutionize the way people do business."

Quotation: Hawkins asserts that "Point of sale inventory systems . . . will revolutionize the way people do business" (Hawkins 27).

Note, however, that you never need to use ellipsis at the beginning or end of a quotation, even if you start or stop the quotation in the middle of one of the source's sentences. Readers assume that you're only borrowing a few of the author's words; they know that, in the original, the sentence continues even if it's not complete in your quotation. Use ellipses only when you take out words from the middle of a quotation.

Use ellipsis with care; it's easy to alter the meaning of the quotation by leaving out just the right words (quote from movie reviewer: "This movie is a fantastic bore"; movie poster's use of quote: ". . . Fantastic! ...").

## **Summary**

Of course, quoting all the time would create a pretty boring report-besides giving your reader the idea that you can't write your own sentences. So reserve quoting for special occasions and rely most on summary. To summarize, just boil down the source's ideas and restate them in your own words and sentences, including a citation to show where the ideas come from. Be careful, though, to use neither the words nor the sentence structure of the original. Good and bad examples of summary follow:

Original: Indeed, the number of such cumulative-trauma cases reported by workers increased nearly fourfold from 1985 to 1989. Responsibility may lie with the rapid-fire

pace of factory work and office assembly lines, where work is parceled into highly specialized tasks. "Jobs are more repetitive than they used to be," observes Franklin E. Mirer, director of the United Auto Workers health and safety department. "The light-duty and rotational jobs have been cut out of the system, and people are pushed all the time."

Stix, Gary. "Handful of Pain: Pressure Mounts to Alleviate Repetitive-Motion Injuries." *Scientific American* May 1991: 118-20.

Bad Summary:

The number of cumulative-trauma cases has increased because of the rapid-fire pace of today's manufacturing businesses.

Good Summary:

Gary Stix points out that manufacturing jobs requiring people to work faster and more consistently have led to higher occurrences of cumulative-trauma disorder (118).

Notice that the bad summary repeats the phrase "the number of such cumulative-trauma cases reported by workers increased," making only slight alterations, but doesn't acknowledge that borrowing with quotation marks. The good summary, however, uses a different set of words and a different sentence structure than does the original, repeating only standard terminology such as "cumulative-trauma." Also note that the good summary includes a citation, while the bad summary does not.

Note: Summary isn't the same as paraphrase, which usually follows the original much more closely in sentence structure. Paraphrase really isn't used very often by practiced writers; you can show your authority and sophistication when you use sources by employing mostly summary. Besides, by using summary, you'll be much less likely to plagiarize.

### **Written Assignment**

Write summaries of the following passages, creating sentences that might be used in a formal report. You need not summarize the entire passage here, any more than you would need to summarize a whole book in order to refer to it in a report. You may also mix quotation and summary--inserting a few quoted words (with quotation marks, of course) into a more extensive summary. Remember to include a citation for your summary in the style sheet appropriate for your profession (APA, MLA, Chicago).

1. Crops are cultivated for their resistance to pests or drought, for example, or for the time they take to mature, and their capacity to store well. After 14,000 years of experimentation and innovation, farmers typically cultivate a wealth of species fine-tuned to specific climates or soil

conditions. And research and development on the farm continues: wild or weedy varieties are crossed with domesticated crops in a never-ending quest to improve.

But now, Western farming technology is removing innovation from the farm, and placing it firmly in the laboratory. The uniform variety from the research centre, with its dependence on chemical fertilizers and pesticides, is displacing the farm-bred varieties. Once these traditional varieties disappear, the knowledge of their cultivation and use is also lost.

From Peter De Groot, "Variety is the Spice of Life." (*New Scientist* Nov. 1992: 4.)

2. Worse, monocultures of genetically uniform plants are extremely susceptible to disease epidemics. "The Irish potato famine, Southern corn blight in the United States, there are plenty of examples from history," warned Michel Pimbert, head of the biodiversity programme at Worldwide Fund for Nature International in Switzerland. "Sixty-two per cent of Bangladeshi rice varieties share a single maternal parent," he added ominously, which means they could all be susceptible to a single disease.

From Jeremy Cherfas, "Farming Goes Back to Its Roots." (*New Scientist* May 1992: 12.)

3. From Linnaeus to Darwin to the present era of cladograms and molecular evolution, a central theme of biology has always been the diversity of life. A new urgency now impels the study of this subject for its own sake: just as the importance of all life forms for human welfare becomes most clear, the extinction of wild species and ecosystems is seen to be accelerating through human action. The dilemma has resulted in the rise of biodiversity studies: the systematic examination of the full array of organisms and the origin of this diversity, together with the methods by which diversity can be maintained and used for the benefit of humanity.

From Paul R. Ehrlich and Edward O. Wilson, "Biodiversity Studies: Science and Policy." (*Science* 253 (1992): 758-61. [passage from p. 758])

4. Declining genetic diversity in agriculture is costly as well. In 1991, the genetic similarity of Brazil's orange trees opened the way for the worst outbreak of citrus canker ever recorded in the country. In 1970, U.S. farmers lost \$1 billion to a disease that swept through uniformly susceptible corn varieties. Similarly, the Irish potato famine in 1846, the Soviet wheat crop loss in 1972, and the citrus canker outbreak in Florida in 1984 all stemmed from reductions in genetic diversity.

From Walter V. Reid, "Conserving Life's Diversity: Can the Extinction Crisis be Stopped?" (*Environmental Science and Technology* 26 (1992): 1090-95. [passage from p. 1090])