AVOIDING ACCIDENTAL PLAGIARISM

How do I know my source is reliable?
When do I quote/paraphrase/summarize?
What, precisely, *is* plagiarism, and what’s the best way to avoid it?
How can I smoothly *integrate* research into my own writing?
EVALUATING YOUR SOURCES

Three key words about sources

**High-quality**
Scholarly sources, peer-reviewed journals, books by authorities in the field
If in doubt, check with your TA!

**Relevant**
Material directly related to your topic and thesis
Material that you understand

**Current**
Published this year? Within the past five years? Fifty?
Talk with your instructor about what constitutes ‘current’.
Questions to ask about your sources

Who is the publisher?
Who is the author?
What is the URL?  .edu, .gov, .org versus .com .ca
Is the source sufficiently specialized?
Is the source current?
Is the source fair and reasonable?
Is the source well written?
With what organizations, if any, is the site affiliated?

--adapted from The Little, Brown Essential Handbook for Writers by Jane E. Aaron and Elaine Bander
EVALUATING YOUR SOURCES

Primary vs. secondary sources

*Primary*
- Firsthand or eyewitness accounts
- Historical documents (letters, speeches, etc.)
- Works of literature
- Reports on experiments or surveys conducted by the writer
- Your own interviews, experiments, observations, or correspondence

*Secondary*
- A reporter’s summary of a controversial issue
- A historian’s account of a battle
- A critic’s reading of a poem
- A psychologist’s evaluation of several studies

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*The Little, Brown Essential Handbook for Writers* by Jane E. Aaron and Elaine Bander
How would you evaluate this source?
A reliable source?
Common knowledge varies among disciplines

Rule of thumb: Common knowledge is something people in your field are likely to know or could easily find out.

Example:

The film Citizen Kane is based on the life of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst. vs.

Prior to the film’s release, a group of movie executives, fearing Hearst’s wrath over the film, offered the studio $842,000 to destroy the negative and all the prints (Kael 44).
Defining plagiarism

Using someone else’s ideas without giving proper credit?
Changing a few of your source’s words and providing a citation?

Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of someone else’s thoughts or wording.
1) Accidental cutting and pasting
2) Incorrect documentation
3) Failure to cite sources adequately
4) Improper paraphrasing
Avoiding accidental cutting and pasting

Use a separate file for each source.

Take notes in columns.
  • Source material on left, your thoughts on right
  • Quotation marks for any quoted material
  • Different font colour for quoted material

Record page numbers.

Note any uncertainties about interpretation.

Back up your notes!
AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Ensuring accurate documentation

PRINT SOURCES
- full name(s) of author(s)
- work’s full title
- year of publication
- city of publication (book)
- volume and issue numbers (journal)
- page numbers on which article appears (journal)
- library call number

ONLINE SOURCES
- all to the left that is relevant
- full URL
- date site was most recently updated
- your date of access
Use direct quotations when...

You include 3 or more consecutive words from a source.
The precise wording is important.
Quotation → starting point, close examination, dispute

The quotation has IMPACT.
e.g., a well-expressed opinion by an authority

Use quotations sparingly, and always include a citation.
TO QUOTE, PARAPHRASE OR SUMMARIZE?

Use a summary when …

You want to reduce a lengthy passage into a sentence or two.

You are briefly representing the overall argument of your source.

You want to present the heart of the idea but not all the detailed evidence.

Always include a reference with a summary.
TO QUOTE, PARAPHRASE OR SUMMARIZE?

Use a paraphrase when...

The content is more important than the wording.
You are summarizing factual information.
You can make the point just as clearly yourself.

A valid paraphrase must do more than change/re-order the author’s words.
Set the source aside as you are writing your paraphrase. Capture, in summary form, the author’s central argument, idea, or opinion. Ensure that the original meaning of the passage remains intact. Do not replicate every detail. Use your own wording and sentence structure. Do not borrow key phrases/wording without quotation marks.
We, as human beings, need to consider the needs of the many as well as the few in order to provide social safety networks for all, since we live in a democratic nation. (33) Democracy requires equal benefits for all citizens. (7)

This essay will examine and explore the complex, dynamic relationships between our digital communications (Internet, email, IM, text, etc.) and the degree to which our mental health is impacted by these communications. (32) Social media use and mental health are intertwined. (8)
Unlike a *metaphrase*, a direct line-by-line or word-by-word translation of a source, to *paraphrase* is to express the idea itself as you understand it.

While sanctions [in Iran] were imposed, Karbasian singled out lack of equipment and machinery as being particularly crippling.

"In fact, one of the most important problems in the way of the mining sector in recent years has been non-application of modern equipment and advanced technologies while old and second-hand machineries are being used in many of the mines some of which have been used in other countries for over 50 years."

http://www.mining.com

Metaphrase:
As restrictions [in Iran] were declared, Karbasian pointed to the absence of tools and apparatuses as being especially challenging…
While sanctions [in Iran] were imposed, Karbasian singled out lack of equipment and machinery as being particularly crippling. "In fact, one of the most important problems in the way of the mining sector in recent years has been non-application of modern equipment and advanced technologies while old and second-hand machineries are being used in many of the mines some of which have been used in other countries for over 50 years."

Access to modern mining machinery in Iran has been hobbled by international sanctions, according to Karbasian (Cite here).
The product we are attempting to design, in cooperation with group 32, is not currently found in the market. For this reason there is not, currently, any direct competition for our product. For this reason the final price for the device will not be as critical as it would be for a product that the market is already saturated with. What will be more important than the price our product is safety. As a traditional prosthesis requires no surgery post amputation the type of surgery our instrumentation would be used for is completely elective. For this reason patients will have a low tolerance for risk both during surgery and over the life of the implant. If our products yield a considerable chance of, death, infection, or injury, which may require more surgery, patients will likely opt for a more traditional prosthetic system. 141 words!
INTEGRATING SUPPORT INTO YOUR TEXT

When writers insert or alter words in a direct quotation, square brackets—[ ]—are placed around the change. The brackets, always used in pairs, enclose words intended to clarify meaning, provide a brief explanation, or to help integrate the quote into the writer’s sentence. A common error writers make is to use parentheses in place of brackets. How are square brackets used around clarifying or explanatory words?

Quotation with brackets used correctly around a clarifying word:
“It [driving] imposes a heavy procedural workload on cognition that . . . leaves little processing capacity available for other tasks” (Salvucci and Taatgen 107). [1]

Quotation with parentheses incorrectly used in place of brackets:
“It (driving) imposes a heavy procedural workload on cognition that . . . leaves little processing capacity available for other tasks” (Salvucci and Taatgen 107).

Note: Parentheses are used incorrectly in place of brackets in this example, making the inserted word look like it could be part of the original text.

How should ellipsis points be spaced within a sentence?
When taking something out of a direct quotation, ellipsis points take the place of the omitted text. A space should appear between each of the three dots, as well as before and after the ellipsis. One of the most common ellipsis point usage errors is to omit the required spaces.

Original direct quotation:
“[D]riving is not as automatic as one might think; in fact, it imposes a heavy procedural workload on cognition that, especially in difficult driving conditions, leaves little processing capacity available for other tasks” (Salvucci and Taatgen 107).

Quotation with ellipsis points used correctly:
“[D]riving is not as automatic as one might think; in fact, it imposes a heavy procedural workload on cognition that . . . leaves little processing capacity available for other tasks” (Salvucci and Taatgen 107).
A number of critics suggest that *To the Lighthouse* explores larger social issues arising out of post-war life. “Reflecting the decline of religion among the intelligentsia, the characters in Woolf’s novel find new ways of imposing order on the world around them” (Lobb 1). Mrs. Ramsay, for example, . . .
ACTIVITY:
See worksheets
IF YOU WANT TO MAKE YOUR WRITING BETTER THAN IT ALREADY IS, BOOK A WRITING CENTRE APPOINTMENT ONLINE AT HTTP://QUEENSU.MYWCONLINE.COM

Visit: Stauffer Library, first floor NE corner
Phone: 613-533-6315
Email: academic.success@queensu.ca
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Facebook.com/QueensLearningStrategies

Twitter: @SASS_WC
Twitter: @SASS_LS