

HANDY-DANDY GUIDE TO DOCUMENTING RESEARCH

Direct Quotations

A. What is a direct quotation?

- A direct quotation is a group of words or sentences that you copy from your source. You must copy the information exactly, word-for-word, punctuation mark by punctuation mark.
- You must enclose the direct quotation within quotation marks.
- If you choose to leave out information from your source, you must indicate the omission with ellipses.
- If you must add a word or change a word within the direct quotation so that it makes sense to your readers, put the addition or change in square brackets.
- If your original source contains an error, you must copy the error and write [sic] following it, to indicate to readers that the mistake is not yours.

B. When do I use direct quotations?

Basically, you should use direct quotations only when something essential would be “lost” from the information you are quoting if you were to put it into your own words. That is, use direct quotation if an author states something in a particularly interesting way, or gives a unique definition or a strong opinion. You should not directly quote facts, statistics, and so forth; you should paraphrase them. Why? Because nothing will be “lost” if you put the information into your own words.

C. How do I introduce direct quotations?

You must introduce direct quotations so that your reader has some idea of who said them. You can give the name of the person who said or wrote what you quoted, and his/her credentials, cite where the information was cited, etc.

D. How do I follow up my direct quotations?

It’s essential not only to introduce your quotations but also to follow them up: tie the quotation to your topic sentence of thesis statement, or give some other explanation that helps the reader understand why you’ve cited this material and what you want him or her to gain by reading it. Just copying quotations into your text without introducing and following them up creates “floating quotes”; the reader has no idea what purpose the quotation serves. Lots of floating quotations creates a “cut and paste” feel to your paper. In addition, if you do not follow up quotations, you lose yet another opportunity to establish your voice in the essay. (You can put this material before the quote, rather than after, if you choose. Just make sure you’ve got it somewhere!)

E. Do I need to follow my direct quotation with a parenthetical citation?

Yes. Always. See *The Concise Guide to Writing*, pp 263-265 2nd ed/pp. 414-415 3rd ed., for exact information about how to correctly format parenthetical citations for your quotations.

F. Do I need to list the source of my direct quotation in my “References” page?
Yes. Always.

Paraphrases and Summaries

A. What is a paraphrase? What is a summary?

When you paraphrase, you put information into your own words. “Your own words” means just that. You can’t “borrow” phrases word-for-word from your source. You must truly use your vocabulary, your sentence structure, and your voice when you paraphrase. You should not use ellipses or quotation marks when you paraphrase.

A summary is pretty much the same thing as a paraphrase, except that when you summarize, you “shrink” the argument or information from a whole article into a small space.

B. When should I paraphrase? And why?

You should paraphrase any and all information that you can, especially facts and statistics. You’ll probably have more paraphrases than direct quotations in your essay. Paraphrasing is preferable to quoting directly because paraphrasing allows you to maintain your own voice in your essay. If you quote a lot of information directly, your paper will begin to sound like a “patchwork” of voices from your resources instead of like you, the author.

C. How do I introduce paraphrases?

You must introduce your paraphrases so that your reader has some idea of who said the information. Was it a doctor? patient? your mother? . . . Introducing the paraphrase helps readers judge the credibility of your information.

D. Do I need to follow my paraphrase with a parenthetical citation?

Yes. Always. After all, you’ve gotten the information from a source, even though you’ve put it into your own words. Therefore, your reader needs to know where you obtained the information.

E. Do I need to list the source of my paraphrase in my “References” page?

Yes. Always.

Parenthetical Citation and the “References” Page

(See *The Concise Guide to Writing*, pages 263-274, 2nd ed/414-423, 3rd ed.)

A. What is parenthetical citation?

Parenthetical citations replace traditional footnotes and endnotes. All direct quotations and paraphrases are followed by parenthetical citations.

The parenthetical citation briefly lists information in parentheses (hence “parenthetical”) about the source of the information contained in the quotation or paraphrase. The parenthetical citation directs interested readers to the full citation of the source listed in the “References” page.

B. How do I format parenthetical citations?

First, decide if you’re going to use MLA-style formatting or APA-style. For papers at SHS, use APA. Generally speaking, an APA-style parenthetical citation contains the last name of the author of the source, the year in which the source was published, and the page number on which you found the information.

If you give some of this information in your introduction to the quotation or paraphrase, however, you do not need to repeat it in the parenthetical citation.

C. What is a “References” page?

The “References” page can also be called the “Bibliography,” or the “Works Consulted” or “Works Cited” page. (“References” is the preferred term in APA format.) The purpose of the “References” is three-fold: it gives credit to the authors of the information you cited; it indicates to your readers the range, scope, and credibility of your sources; and it gives your readers the information they need to look up your sources for themselves, in case they want to learn more about your topic. Please note: most professors will not accept a research paper unless you've included a “References” page and it is formatted correctly. Leaving out a “References” page amounts to plagiarism. It’s an essential essential essential element of a research paper.

D. How do I format my "References" page?

Note that the items in the "References" page are listed alphabetically, by the last name of the author or editor of your source material. They are not listed in the order in which they appear in your essay.

Also, note that the entries are "outdented." That is, the first line of each entry is flush with the left margin of the paper, and the second and subsequent lines are indented. (Just the opposite of a paragraph.) This format makes the author's name "stand out." If you are using a word processor, you can type all of the information you'll need in the entry, "select" the text, and use the command for creating a "hanging indent" to format each entry correctly and easily.

E. Is there a special way to format the information in each entry of my "References" page?

You bet! In fact, this is really, really important. You will have to use a handbook in order to format each entry correctly. Again, remember to use APA-style format when writing for human services. Different types of sources--books by one author, books by two authors, anthologies of several articles, a story in a magazine, etc.--require different formats. You have to pay close attention to the details in the handbook. It's a bit of a nuisance, but it's what's required for college-level writing, graduate-level writing, and articles you submit for publication.

F. What the difference between MLA-style and APA-style documentation?

First, let's explain what the terms mean. MLA stands for Modern Language Association; they're the group who invented "MLA-style" documentation. APA stands for the American Psychological Association; they're the ones who created APA-style. MLA style is used for writing in the arts and humanities--in classes like English, History, Art History, and Music. By contrast, APA-style is used for writing in the social sciences--Human Services, Anthropology, Sociology, Criminology, etc. Although MLA and APA style are the most widely-used styles of formatting, others exist, too.

The basic difference between MLA-style and APA-style is that APA lists the year of publication for each source, in the parenthetical citation and near the beginning of the "References" page citation. That's because in Human Services and other social sciences, writers tend to cite more studies and articles than whole books. Researchers who conduct those studies and write them up as articles tend to do lots and lots of studies on the same topic; therefore, their articles often have similar names. Adding the year helps clarify which article by a researcher you're using.

In the arts and humanities, however, writers tend to cite books more often than articles. Authors of books tend to publish less frequently than authors of articles, and books usually have distinctive names whereas studies may have similar ones. Therefore while the year of publication is important in MLA-style formatting, it is not as necessary to help establish clarity as it is in APA-style formatting.