Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing

Knowing when to rely on a quote, paraphrase, or summary can be tricky. The following guidelines will help you decide when and how to use each of them in your academic writing.

**Direct Quotes**
Use a direct quote when you find the wording particularly memorable, you need to present the original wording as evidence to support your argument, or you want to refute specific words or phrases drawn from the source. Attribute the quote to its source by adding a suitable citation.

**Paraphrase**
A legitimate paraphrase rewords the source’s original language, refashions its original sentence structure, expresses its original meaning, and provides a suitable citation. Paraphrase when you want to pay close attention to the author’s reasoning but do not think the section warrants a direct quote. See page two for more information.

**Summary**
A legitimate summary consists of a rephrased, more compact version of the original author’s words, followed by a suitable citation. It is unbiased, respectful, and fair. Summarize when you need to give a general overview or highlight major points of a discussion.

While you gain credibility as a writer by presenting an unbiased summary, you should still summarize sources in light of your own argument. Summarizing allows you to distance yourself from a source if necessary.

Finally, when writing a paraphrase or summary, put quotation marks around any original wording that you wish to retain. If you do not use quotation marks, you imply that the language is your own when it is not.

**Common Knowledge and Shared Language**
Common knowledge consists of factual information already understood by the audience and widely accepted by scholars. It is noncontroversial and appears in many credible sources, such as standard reference works. For example, it is common knowledge that George Washington was the first President of the United States.

You do not need to provide a citation for common knowledge unless you refer to it by using the exact wording of a research source. Then you must cite the source and place the borrowed language in quotation marks.
Shared language is a vocabulary specific to a discipline, profession, or specialty. It is not plagiarism to use these common words or phrases without quoting or citing them. They include the following:

- Customary titles: research assistant
- Preferred bias-free language: postal carrier
- Conventional descriptions: low-fat diet
- Specialized terms that belong to a particular discipline: cognitive dissonance

**Examples**

The following examples illustrate crucial differences between a plagiarized version and a legitimate paraphrase of the same source.

Although the plagiarized version expresses the source’s meaning and includes a suitable citation, it violates the other conventions of paraphrasing: it retains the source’s sentence structure and appropriates language that belongs to the source (signified by the underlined words) without enclosing it within quotation marks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Source</th>
<th>Plagiarism</th>
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<td>Once civilizations had emerged in various parts of the world, food helped to connect them together. Food-trade routes acted as international communications networks that fostered not just commercial exchange, but cultural and religious exchange too. The spice routes that spanned the Old World led to cross-cultural fertilization in fields as diverse as architecture, science, and religion.</td>
<td>As Tom Standage explains, after civilizations developed in different regions of the world, food helped to link them together. Food-trade routes served as international networks, facilitating not only commercial exchange but also cultural and religious exchange. The Old World spice trade influenced such diverse fields as theology, science, and the fine arts (x).</td>
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By contrast, the legitimate paraphrase represents an acceptable version of the source. This version not only credits the source but also conveys its meaning without unfairly appropriating its language or relying on its sentence structure.

<table>
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<th>Legitimate Paraphrase</th>
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<td>Once civilizations had emerged in various parts of the world, food helped to connect them together. Food-trade routes acted as international communications networks that fostered not just commercial exchange, but cultural and religious exchange too. The spice routes that spanned the Old World led to cross-cultural fertilization in fields as diverse as architecture, science, and religion.</td>
<td>As Tom Standage explains, food served as a link among nascent civilizations. In the Old World, the trade in food meant expanding commercial opportunities, yet it also meant the intercultural transmission of ideas. Because transporting food over long distances relied on extensive “communications networks,” it promoted changes in religious beliefs as well as developments in the fine arts and scientific thought (x).</td>
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