

Using Sources

Direct Quotation, Paraphrase, Summary

There are three ways of incorporating another writer's work into your own writing: direct quotation, paraphrase, and summary. To use sources most effectively, understand the purpose, their techniques, and the distinctions between the three ways.

Direct Quotation

How to directly quote:

- Copy the material precisely, using the author's exact wording, spelling, and punctuation.
- Use quotation marks around the quote. If you add words for clarity, use brackets around your additions.
- Give credit to the source. Provide a lead-in and an end-sentence citation.

For example:

Original sentence from source essay: *My father loved books, and since I loved my father with an aching devotion, I decided to love books as well.*

Quoting the sentence: *Alexie explains that "My father loved books, and since I loved my father with an aching devotion, I decided to love books as well (1401).*

Paraphrase

How to paraphrase the source:

- Use your own words.
- Clearly represent the source idea in the same general length.
- Give credit to the source. Provide a lead-in and end-sentence citation.

For example:

Original sentence from source essay: *My father loved books, and since I loved my father with an aching devotion, I decided to love books as well.*

Paraphrasing the source sentence: *Alexie explains that he imitated his father's love of reading because he deeply loved his father (1401).*

Summary

How to summarize the source:

- Use your own words.
- Condense the original by stating the main and supporting points.
- Give credit to the source. Provide a lead-in and end-sentence citation.

For example:

Original source essay: Sherman Alexie's "Superman and Me"

Summarizing the essay: *In his essay "Superman and Me," Sherman Alexie illustrates the power of reading and writing for Native Americans.*

Source: Sherman Alexie, "Superman and Me," in *The Story and Its Writer*, 7th edition, New York: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2007, pages 1401 – 1402.

Direct Quotation

What is a Direct Quotation?

A direct quotation is a direct restatement of an author's words. A direct quotation must match the source word for word, letter for letter, and must be introduced and concluded with quotation marks.

What is the Purpose / Value of a Direct Quotation?

- ❑ A direct quotation is useful when the original writing is uniquely more effective than paraphrasing.
- ❑ A direct quotation – introducing or following your own point – strengthens and enhances your point.

How do you directly quote?

- ❑ Select direct quotations to support the point you are making. Use quotations sparingly.
- ❑ Read the author's passage closely. Be certain that you understand the author's meaning.
- ❑ Remember that a direct quotation should duplicate the source exactly. Be vigilant in copying correctly and then check your copy.
- ❑ Integrate your quotation effectively. Your reader will be confused if you do not introduce the direct quote or integrate the quote smoothly into the point you are making in your writing.
- ❑ Effective quotations in writing make use of signal phrases. Signal phrases contain 1) the source author's name and 2) a verb that indicates the source author's attitude to what he or she writes. (For assistance with signal phrases, refer to LB Brief, pages 466 – 468.)
- ❑ To avoid plagiarism, provide a lead-in and an end-sentence citation.

How do you integrate quotations effectively into your own writing?

- ❑ Never simply place a direct quotation within your writing without introducing the source and/or without giving an end-sentence citation. For example, never do this: Alexie concludes his essay with a claim. "I am trying to save our lives." His claim is that urging Indian youth to value literacy will save their lives.
- ❑ You may place a quotation anywhere in your sentence. For example:
 - **At the beginning:** *"I am trying to save our lives," Alexie exhorts at the conclusion of his essay ("Superman" 1402).*
 - **In the middle:** *Alexie concludes his essay with the claim that "I am trying to save our lives" by urging Indian youth to value literacy ("Superman" 1402).*
 - **At the end:** *Alexie concludes his essay with the claim that by urging Indian youth to value literacy, he is "trying to save our lives" ("Superman" 1402).*

Paraphrase

What is a Paraphrase?

A paraphrase is a restatement of an author's idea in your own words in generally the same length as the author's.

What is the Purpose / Value of a Paraphrase?

- ❑ Paraphrasing is useful when you'd like to represent the author's idea, but don't feel the original wording merits a direct quotation.
- ❑ Paraphrasing allows you to include details and specifics as you focus on an author's idea in your own writing.

How do you paraphrase an author's written idea?

- ❑ Read the author's passage closely. Re-read the passage and be certain that you understand the writer's meaning.
- ❑ Restate the author's idea *in your own words*.
- ❑ You don't need to follow the sentence structure of the original, nor do you need to include all the specifics or details in the original. Select and include what is important to the point you are making in your own writing.
- ❑ To clarify where your paraphrase begins and ends, and to avoid plagiarism, provide a lead-in and an end-sentence citation.

What is the difference between a summary and a paraphrase?

A summary condenses the original material; a paraphrase restates the source in generally the same length.

For example:

Source:

"My father, who is one of the few Indians who went to Catholic school on purpose, was an avid reader of westerns, spy thrillers, murder mysteries, gangster epics, basketball-player biographies, and anything else he could find. He bought his books by the pound at Dutch's Pawn Shop, Goodwill, Salvation Army, and Value Village. When he had extra money, he bought new novels at supermarkets, convenience stores, and hospital gift shops. Our house was filled with books. They were stacked in crazy piles in the bathroom, bedrooms, and living room. In a fit of unemployment-inspired creative energy, my father built a set of bookshelves and soon filled them with a random assortment of books about the Kennedy assassination, Watergate, the Vietnam War, and the entire twenty-three-book series of the Apache westerns. My father loved books, and since I loved my father with an aching devotion, I decided to love books as well."

Summary: *Alexie remembers that his father filled their lives with books of all kinds, modeling for a devoted son the love of books (1401).*

Source:

"My father loved books, and since I loved my father with an aching devotion, I decided to love books as well."

Paraphrase: *Alexie explains that he imitated his father's love of reading because he deeply loved his father (1401).*

Summary Writing

The purpose of this handout is to explore summary writing, an important genre of writing that is often used in business, scientific inquiry, and education. By learning how to summarize more effectively, you will get more out of the things you read and be able to share what you've learned more successfully with others.

A summary restates another's work *in your own words*. As you summarize, you state the main idea and supporting points of your source in the order of the original. The poet X.J. Kennedy defines summary in this way: "You take the essence of the author's meaning, without the supporting evidence and other details that make that gist convincing or interesting" (18).

Why Summarize?

- Summarizing is one of the best strategies to become a better, more critical reader.
- Summarizing illustrates your clear understanding of the source work.
- Summarizing is a useful step in exam preparation: by summarizing you create your own condensed/shortened version of the source, a version which you can refer to later as you study the material.
- Summarizing will focus your attention on how the source work is organized, a focus which will strengthen your own organization as a writer.
- Summarizing a source in your own words allows you to make clear distinctions between the ideas of others and your own ideas.
- Summarizing allows you to join the academic conversation by incorporating the ideas of others (source work) into your own work.

As you can see, summarizing has many benefits that not only help you better understand others' ideas, but also help you become a better, more active reader. Because of this, there are many situations where you may find summary writing helpful.

What Can Be Summarized?

- Lectures, presentations
- Textbooks, course print, or online materials
- Video clips / audio clips
- Workshops
- Essays, journal articles, etc.

Based on the situation, you may find different ways to best compose your summary and, when asked to summarize for a class assignment, you should always follow your instructor's guidelines. Most summaries, however, follow a general format that, once learned, can help you summarize more effectively and in less time. Below, you'll find a step-by-step guide on how to write a basic summary to help get you started.

HOW TO WRITE A SUMMARY

Step 1

Critical Reading

1. Read the attached essay by Sherman Alexie closely. Understand the writer's meaning. Look up words or concepts that you don't know.
2. Re-read and annotate the essay.
3. Understand the organization. Work through the essay to identify its sections (single paragraphs or groups of paragraphs focused on a single topic).
4. Identify the main idea for each paragraph (or section) and note that main idea in the margin.
5. On a separate sheet of paper, write a one sentence summary *in your own words* for each paragraph. In this way, you'll actually be outlining the essay.
6. Re-read your one-sentence summary outline of the essay. Now that you understand the paragraph points clearly, you'll be able to synthesize these points into a main point for the entire essay.
7. At the top of your outline, write this main idea of the entire essay *in your own words*.

Once you've finished with the outline, you're ready to begin drafting the body of your summary. At this stage, you needn't worry about grammar or punctuation. You're simply trying to get your ideas on paper so you can begin organizing and developing them.

Step 2

Drafting

1. Begin with a **Topic Sentence** that states the author, the title, and the main idea of the essay. For example: *In his essay "Superman and Me," Sherman Alexie illustrates the power of reading and writing for Native Americans.*
2. Working from your outline, write out the paragraph's main/supporting points in your own words in the same order as the points appear in the essay.
3. Remember that a summary paragraph requires more than stringing together the entries in an outline. Use **transitions** to fill in the logical connections between the author's ideas. (For help with transitions, refer to LB Brief, pages 55 – 57.)
4. Repeat the author's name from time to time for transition, reminding your reader that the ideas are the author's and not your own. Refer to the author by name. For example: *Alexie acknowledges*, or *Alexie explains*. (For help with signal phrases like this, refer to LB Brief, pages 466 – 467.)
5. Refer to the author by last name, not first. For example, if the author's name is Sherman Alexie, and you'd like to shorten the reference to one name, write Alexie, not Sherman.
6. If you use **quotations** in your summary, use them sparingly. In a summary paragraph of 10 – 12 sentences, use no more than two quotations. (For help with quotation marks, refer to LB Brief pages 378 – 382.)
7. Integrate your quotations effectively. If you use full-sentence quotations, provide a lead-in and an end-sentence citation. (For examples of lead-ins and end-sentence citations, refer to LB Brief.)
8. Write a **conclusion** sentence that summarizes *in your own words* the conclusion of the source.

When you have your rough draft finished, you're ready to begin shaping and refining it. Again, don't spend time worrying about punctuation or grammar at this stage as you are likely to modify or remove large parts of your summary as you revise.

Step 3

Revising

1. Compare your summary version to the original essay. Have you remained faithful to the essay? If the author of the essay read your summary, would he or she feel well represented?
2. Remember your **audience**: he or she has not read the source essay. Have you made your summary clear and understandable to someone who has not read the original essay?
3. Have you been careful not to plagiarize? If you used the words of the author, have you put those words in quotation marks?
4. Have you refrained from including your own ideas, opinions, or interpretations?

When you are satisfied with the shape and substance of your paragraph, you're ready to start putting the finishing touches on it. It's often helpful at this stage to read your summary aloud or invite others to read it as this can help you identify errors.

Step 4

Editing

1. Be vigilant regarding your frequent grammatical errors.
2. Look out for the most common grammatical errors: fragments, comma-splices, fused-sentences, comma errors, subject-verb agreement errors, pronoun errors, apostrophe errors, spelling errors.
3. Check your format. If you've been asked to write a summary *paragraph*, have you formatted your summary in paragraph form? If you've been given a particular length (e.g. 10 – 12 sentences) have you stayed within these guidelines?

Congratulations! Now that you've finished your summary, you're ready to share it with a friend, family member, or teacher.

Works Cited

Aaron, Jane E. LB Brief. 3rd ed. New York: Longman, 2008.

Driscoll, Dana L. "Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing." The OWL at Purdue. 10 Sep. 2006. Purdue University. 10 Oct. 2008 < owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/01/>.

Summary "Superman and Me"

In his essay, "Superman and Me," **Sherman Alexie illustrates** the power of reading and writing for Native Americans. While growing up on an Indian Reservation, Alexie learned how to read at the age of three by using *Superman* comics. **He writes** that he got his love of reading from his father who would buy "his books by the pound" from a number of stores. Their house was filled with books ranging from Apache westerns to books on Watergate. **Alexie describes** his childhood's moment of clarity when he understood the meaning of the paragraph. **He writes** that he soon saw everything as interrelated paragraphs. Although Alexie could not yet "read" words, he could piece together the meaning of the comic through pictures. As he continued on his reading journey, Alexie began reading classics like *The Grapes of Wrath* while the other children his age were beginning to read *Dick and Jane*. Alexie remembers that his ability caused resentment from his peers who constantly reminded him that as an Indian child, he was "expected to be stupid." Alexie, however, "refused to fail"; instead he would make it his life's work to be a strong reader and a smart Indian. He is also committed to helping Indian youth. **He concludes** his essay by explaining that he is trying to reach all Indian youth: "I am trying to save our lives."

Clear and effective topic sentence includes author, title, and main idea.

Transitions used to fill in the logical gaps between ideas.

Continuous reminders that this is a summary and that these are Alexie's points.

Conclusion summarizes Alexie's own conclusion.

Alexie, Sherman. "Superman and Me." Excerpted from The Story and Its Writer, 7th edition, edited by Ann Charters. Bedford: 2007.

Accurate source citation

Response Writing

In academic assignments, response writing often accompanies a summary. An instructor might ask you to read information, summarize it for others, and then present your response to its ideas. Depending on the purpose and audience, the format for your response may vary from an essay to a set of paragraphs (one summary, one response). This handout outlines the steps you could take to compose a paragraph response (but they're helpful in composing an essay response as well). Let's assume that you have already completed a critical reading of the source and a clear summary paragraph.

In response writing, an instructor asks you to respond to the ideas in a *source essay* oftentimes in the form of a **prompt**. A prompt is a guided question or statement that elicits a focused written response. If the instructor does not provide a prompt, then the challenge is to develop your own focused response to the source. Also, keep in mind the variety of responses requested. Some prompts ask for a critical response (e.g. *explain, compare/contrast, analyze*) while others ask for a personal response (e.g. *narrate, describe*). After the rigor of summarizing, many writers find response writing much easier to compose.

How to Write a Response

1. Begin by **reading the assignment prompts**. Note (underline, circle, highlight) key words in the prompt that direct the form your response should take: e.g. narrate, describe, identify, illustrate. Read the entire prompt closely; pay attention to all the questions included in the prompt. Often a prompt will include several questions designed to help you develop ideas; other times an instructor expects that you will address each question in the prompt. If you aren't certain, clarify your instructor's expectations by asking him or her.
2. **Brainstorm or free-write** ideas that the prompt generates. Think and write down all the specific details related to your topic.
3. **Organize** your ideas in a logical, coherent, and effective way with a rough outline.
4. **Draft** your response paragraph.
 - a. Begin with a **Topic Sentence**. Much like a thesis statement asserts the main idea in an essay, your topic sentence should assert the main idea of your response paragraph. Your topic sentence in a response paragraph should also accomplish the following:
 - a. Provide a **smooth transition** between the summary paragraph and your response paragraph. This transition will ensure that your reader understands when your writing moves from the summary of someone else's ideas to your own ideas.
 - b. **Focus** on your main idea and state that main idea precisely and effectively. All the supporting points in the paragraph should support this topic sentence in a focused way.
 - b. **Develop** your paragraph with details that support the focus, following your rough outline. The length of this paragraph should follow assignment guidelines. In WR115, those guidelines require a minimum of 12 sentences and a maximum of 15 sentences.
 - c. **Conclude** your paragraph effectively.

- d. **Revise** your paragraph.
 - a. Re-read the prompt and be certain that your paragraph clearly focuses a response to the prompt.
 - b. Check your paragraph for logical and effective development, coherence (sentences should logically and coherently link), and grammatically effective writing.
 - c. Make sure that you have not summarized in the response.
 - d. Share you draft with student collaborators, Writing Center Assistants, your instructor.

Sample of Response Paragraph Writing

Here is an example of a response prompt and a response paragraph to Sherman Alexie's *Superman and Me*. In this example, the instructions offer you a prompt choice. Once you've decided on a question to respond to, underline the key words (for this example, you'll see that they're in boldface).

Sample Prompt: Choose **ONE** of the following to focus your response:

1. How was reading viewed in your household growing up? **Explain** the ways in which reading was either important or not important to you as a child.
2. How important is reading to you now? **Narrate** a recent instance that demonstrates either a positive or a negative experience with reading as you focus your response on the importance (or lack of importance) you place on reading now.

Sample Response to "Superman and Me"

Like Alexie, I too was prompted to read at an early age and in the midst of a difficult childhood. I learned to read before starting school, mostly as a way to hide from the world that was going on around me. Books were my way to escape from the alcoholic –abusive household I was raised in. I read alone, most often, outside under a favorite oak tree or behind closed doors inside. This activity gave me hours of privacy and such great enjoyment. And the more I read, the more I wanted to read, wherever I was. As I grew older and began living on my own, I realized that all my hours of reading had paid off. The knowledge I gained from reading showed me that there was a different world out there. I didn't have to continue in the cycle of addiction and abuse. By extending my education, I could set an example for my children who, in turn, would do the same for their children as well. Knowledge and education have helped me lift myself as well as others around me out of the recycling bin of despair and has put us back on the shelf – a brand new product.

Points to appreciate in the model paragraph above:

- Topic sentence provides a smooth transition between the summary paragraph and the response paragraph.
- Topic Sentence provides focus for this paragraph.
- Paragraph develops details to support the focus (topic sentence) of the paragraph.
- These supporting points are interesting and clear.
- The response paragraph answers the prompt (option one).
- Paragraph begins clearly with a topic sentence and concludes effectively.
- Paragraph provides clear transitional words between sentences to provide coherence.
- Paragraph is effectively organized, well developed, and grammatically correct.

