

How do I incorporate sources into my papers?  
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Including information sources in your research papers, presentations, and other assignments is important, but *how* exactly do you incorporate these sources into your writing?

You may choose to summarize, paraphrase, or directly quote an information source in your own research. A quotation is when we take the original words of a written text such as a book, article, or website, a presentation, or a video, and include them in our own work. They are usually encased in quotation marks to set them apart from your own words. We tend to quote information when we are examining an author's exact words, or when the author has stated something in such a memorable or unique way that we want to include it in our own work. For example, you would likely include direct quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream Speech" rather than summarize it, because it's such a unique piece of American history. There may, however, be times when you want to provide a broad overview of a source in a few sentences or words. In this case, you'll want to summarize a source.

A good summary gets to the heart of a source's purpose, argument, or main point in a short amount of text using our own words, rather than those of the author. Rather than detail all the plot points of The Wizard of Oz in an essay, you might just say it's the story of a young girl from Kansas who gets swept away by a tornado to the magical land of Oz and must find her way home again.

But what do you do if you only want to include information from a certain part of source? This is where you can paraphrase. Paraphrasing is when we take a portion of an information source, such as a paragraph, page, or few pages, and restate it in our own words. Paraphrasing is not taking a sentence and changing a word a two. It's about keeping the original intent of an author's writing without quoting their words directly to better incorporate a passage into the flow of our own writing. Rather than directly quote the entire results of a scientific research study, we might condense those ideas down to a sentence such as: Immersing ourselves in nature has a variety of positive health effects, particularly around lowering stress levels.

As a good scholar, anytime you quote, summarize, or paraphrase an information source you should cite it.

Good paraphrasing and summarizing takes practice! It's ok to reach out to your professor for help.

For more help incorporating sources in your writing and citing them, contact the UH Writing Center and the UH Libraries.