Citing Sources: When, Why, and How

Direct Quotes
Direct quotation is a most abused form of citation. Too often, students substitute others’ work for forming a theses and synthesizing sources to reflect their own feelings and ideas. Lifting passages of someone else’s work, putting quotes around it, and citing it does not necessarily qualify as research and does nothing to promote or develop critical thinking skills.

Students often shy away from authoring because they lack confidence. Thankfully, there is a relatively simple way to overcome this feeling of inadequacy—simply do the work. Prioritize learning. Give yourself enough time to work on the project. Speak to your professor or classmates or librarians about ideas you have. The more you write and the more you achieve utilizing your own language, the better you will become.

When to quote: when utilizing or analyzing another writer’s specific wording

Why to quote: to call attention to specific word’s use due to its significance or singularity

How to quote: In analysis of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s life and work, Fitzgerald’s upbringing has been described as rife with “patrician pretensions” that stemmed from his parents and influenced his later work (Hollington 123).

You should have a corresponding citation for this in-text citation in your Works Cited list. Here’s the corresponding citation (in MLA format) for the direct quote above:


Summarize & Paraphrase: what’s the difference?
Both seasoned scholars and literary novices alike easily and understandably confuse these two concepts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summarize</th>
<th>Paraphrase</th>
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<td><strong>When</strong>: you have read carefully and are interested in condensing and analyzing an author’s longer piece</td>
<td><strong>When</strong>: you can state an author’s specific point more clearly and directly</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Why</strong>: to offer a condensed version, in your own words, of an author’s wording and expand on it with your own understanding and descriptive analysis</td>
<td><strong>Why</strong>: to interpret and express the original author’s specific intent in your own words</td>
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“Zora Neale Hurston, born in Florida near the turn of the twentieth century was, for thirty years, the most prolific Black woman writer in the United States. Alice Walker, born in Georgia some forty years later, is one of the most prolific Black women writers in America today. Not only do both women stand as exemplary representatives of the achievement of the American Black woman as writer, but their fiction reveals a strong spiritual kinship. Though separated by place and by time, these two Black women writers, inevitably it seems, were drawn together, and Zora Hurston became an important influence in Alice Walker’s life.”

**How**: Alice Walker’s work is influenced by her literary predecessor Zora Neale Hurston (Freeman 371). This is most apparent in Walker’s characterization of …

**How**: Despite differences of geography and timing, Alice Walker’s work and life have been influenced by Zora Neale Hurston, who was Walker’s predecessor in the field of prolific African American female authors (Freeman 371).

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