

Quoting, Paraphrasing, & Summarizing

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Research and the use of different kinds of evidence and texts are important skills and necessary strategies in writing, developing an argument, and participating in academic discourse. In other words, the work you engage in and produce at the university will require you to read about, think about, write about, organize, synthesize, and deploy other people's ideas, words, concepts, studies, data, and expertise. Depending on the class and your discipline, what counts as solid, useful, and telling evidence will vary, but the use of evidence and the incorporation of evidence to support your position and rhetorical authority will always be required. The use of research and evidence requires more than just copying passages from articles, books, websites, or sources; this would be negligent and plagiarism. Part of research and writing and argument is demonstrating that you understand how to incorporate evidence, how you document evidence (according to your discipline, in our case MLA), and how you **quote, paraphrase, and summarize** the work of others.

Whether you are quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing, the evidence or selected text you use must be relevant to your writing, must support your argument, must be carefully framed or incorporated, must be attributed and cited when necessary, must be properly punctuated according to your discipline's style, and must be explicated or analysed.

A Sample Passage

Squirrels (excerpt by Edmond Chang)

Squirrels belong to the order *rodentia* sharing a common heraldry with nearly 1,650 species. Rodents, whose family tree includes squirrels, mice, rats, guinea pigs, hamsters, beavers, porcupines, muskrats, chipmunks, woodchucks, lemmings, and voles (but not moles, shrews, hedgehogs, hares or rabbits), are the largest group of living mammals making up forty percent of all present day mammalia. The largest species are the South American capibaras who grow to the size of small pigs and weigh up to a hundred pounds.

There are over three hundred and fifty species of squirrels including red squirrels, fox squirrels, ground squirrels, pygmy squirrels, antelope squirrels, flying squirrels, and squirrel-like animals such as the gopher, ground hog, and prairie dog. The most common squirrel is the gray squirrel or more specifically the eastern gray squirrel, *Sciurus carolinensis*. *Sciurus* is Latin for squirrel and is derived from the Greek *skiouros*, the combination of *skia* meaning "shade" and *oura* meaning "tail." Johann Friedrich Gmelin, the German naturalist, published the thirteenth edition of Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* in 1788 citing for the first time *Sciurus carolinensis*, the "shade-tail of Carolina."

Gray squirrels range all over the eastern United States, up into Canada, and only as far west as the Mississippi where the deciduous forest meets the great plains. They are no stranger to the mid-Atlantic, Maryland, or the sloping lawns, splashing fountain, and long alleys lined by willow oaks of the university's McKeldin Mall.

Grays are also called cat squirrels, wood cats, Silvertails, Greybacks, or Bannertails. You can almost imagine them on the back of a jersey or on the side of a football helmet. On the Eastern Shore of Maryland, gray squirrel is a misnomer. In a curious reversal, the gray squirrel is misnamed the fox squirrel by locals and the fox squirrel, *Sciurus niger*, is the gray squirrel. *Honneek* is the Delaware name meaning squirrel. *Salali* is Cherokee. *Xanikw* is Lenape. In Russian, it's *Bielka*, in Malaysian, *Tupai*, in Japanese, *Risu*, and Yiddish, *Yipsel*. *Song shu* is Mandarin Chinese for squirrel. In Bavarian, it's *Oachkatzl*, in Irish, *Iora glas*, and in Czech, *Veverka*. In fact, *Ververka* is etymologically related to the French *vair* meaning squirrel's fur. The ancestral Cinderella from the early Norman-French tale might have originally worn slippers of squirrel's fur to the prince's ball. Over the centuries, the telling of the tale replaced *vair* with the homophone *verre*, French for glass.

Quoting

Quoting is word for word or verbatim, relevant and usually brief, introduced or framed by your writing, in quotation marks (block quoting requires different formatting), and needs attribution and citation. Quoting or using quotations is the most common form of incorporating evidence into your writing. A direct quotation is used to support your claims or subclaims; to provide further evidence or examples; to introduce a writer's claim, point, or position; when you want to use the writer as an authoritative or expert voice; or when the writer's words are particularly powerful, poetic, emotional, or well-written.

Quoting from the Original: There are many different kinds of squirrels including “red squirrels, fox squirrels, ground squirrels, pygmy squirrels, antelope squirrels, flying squirrels” (Chang 3). Gray squirrels, in fact, come with many different names as Edmond Chang lists, “Grays are also called cat squirrels, wood cats, Silvertails, Greybacks, or Bannertails” (4).

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is not verbatim, is put into your own words, changing words or phrasing but preserving and maintaining the passage’s original meaning and intent, introduced or framed by your writing, not in quotation marks, and needs attribution and citation. Paraphrasing is another common form of incorporating evidence or other people’s ideas into your writing. Paraphrasing is an alternative to direct quotation; to rewrite and synthesize someone else’s ideas without changing their meaning or intent; to condense and explain information, particularly in long passages or in tables, charts, or diagrams; to provide further evidence or examples.

Paraphrasing from the Original: Gray squirrels are all over North America, particularly the eastern US, up into Canada, as far west as the Mississippi, and especially in the mid-Atlantic (Chang 4).

Summarizing

Summarizing is not verbatim, is put into your own words, including only the main points or main ideas, provides a broad overview, often shorter than the original text, not in quotation marks, and needs attribution to the source. Summarizing is the final form of incorporating other people’s ideas or information into your writing. Summarizing is meant to condense and distill long passages or whole texts; to outline someone else’s main ideas or main points in your words leaving out details and examples; to briefly give examples of several different ideas, arguments, or points of view on a topic; to use fewer words than the original text; to provide further evidence or examples.

Summarizing from the Original: Edmond Chang tells the story of how Cinderella’s slippers once might have been made from squirrel fur and not glass.

The Quotation Sandwich

Topic statement or subclaim

A quotation, or any other kind of evidence really, must be used with care.

Development of subclaim

Quotations should be used when necessary to support your arguments. A quotation should not be in substitution of your own writing or your own argument. Dr. Writer A. Extraordinaire says, “Quotations are support, they are the lettuce, cheese, tomatoes, and other toppings of a sandwich.

Paragraphs develop one main idea.

Incorporation of a relevant quote

In other words, an argument, the meat of the sandwich, cannot stand alone, nor can just its condiments. The writer’s words frame everything like the bread holds the sandwich together” (17). In other words, quotations cannot stand by themselves. They need to be properly set-up, introduced, incorporated, and provide useful and telling support.

Watch punctuation and citation format.

Restatement, analysis, and explication

Quotations are not the meat of an argument, but the fine dressing that makes the argument taste better.