



Using Quotations and Paraphrases in APA Format

Keep careful notes to ensure that you are always able to pinpoint precisely the origins of your ideas and your arguments. Support for your statements can be established by several means. One can, without citation, call upon the general store of "common knowledge," although this is not a useful source for technical ideas or detailed judgments. Paraphrased references to concepts in published sources are common. Evidence can also be presented through quotation.

Paraphrase

Paraphrase is the description of someone else's ideas in your own words, and is the most common way information is cited in APA-style papers. Proper paraphrasing is a skill. You must not only acknowledge your debt but *re-compose* the original *in your own words*. Here is a quoted passage:

“Particularly controversial has been the balance of two contributing sources of information: item-to-item associations and item-to-context associations. The latter refers to information about the words, such as their position in a spatial or temporal stream” (Franklin & Mewhort, 2015, p. 115).

Here is a paraphrase of part of this passage:

The extent to which item-to-item and item-to-context associations affect the organization of memory is still debated (Franklin & Mewhort, 2015, p. 115).

Note: The citation for the quoted passage includes a page number; although this is not an absolute requirement for a paraphrase, it is recommended. Remember that if you repeat a number of key words from the original, even in a different order, you are guilty of unacknowledged quotation—**plagiarism**, the most serious academic offence. Here, “item-to-item associations” and “item-to-context associations” are standard terms in the field; they are not unique to Franklin and Mewhort and so do not constitute plagiarism.

Embedded Quotations

Embedded quotations incorporate brief passages within a sentence of your own.

Recently, several commentators have suggested that “business education may have a deleterious effect on the morality and ethics of managers”; thus, careful training in ethics “is increasingly viewed to be an important component” (Assudani et al., 2011, p. 104).

This approach is both efficient and elegant. Notice the composite technique: Part of the

passage is actually paraphrased while short selections convey the style of the original. The result is a compact statement that reveals its meaning and its authority at the same moment.

Block Quotations

Block quotations are not used as frequently in APA-style writing as in some other formats. However, some passages so clearly articulate an idea that they add authority to a paper. When working with a passage of 40 words or more, do not enclose it in quotation marks but indent it five spaces (1/2 inch) from the left-hand margin, starting on a new line:

The long-term effects of sleep on memory consolidation were minimal except in one test, a non-hippocampal mirror-tracing task:

On the behavioral level, this finding is similar to that of Stickgold et al. (2000), who reported an improvement in visual discrimination skill only when participants were allowed to sleep during the first night after training. Their study is particularly remarkable because it is one of the rare studies showing a process of memory consolidation that strongly requires sleep, i.e., it shows no improvement without sleep. In the present study, mirror-tracing skills improved during training, and this improvement remained stable between test sessions. However, only if participants slept after training, additional off-line improvements were seen. (Schönauer, Grätsch, & Gais, 2015, p. 75)

Note that the parenthetical citation *follows* the period instead of preceding it. Both the text and the quotation are double-spaced, with no additional space preceding the quotation. In most situations, paraphrases, along with a few judiciously chosen embedded quotations, are more effective than long block quotations.

Ellipsis, Interpolation, and Other Changes to Quotations

Fitting quoted matter into a sentence can be difficult; fortunately, some changes may be made to quotations.

Interpolations

Additions to the text to clarify pronoun reference are normally permitted. All such additions must be enclosed within square brackets:

Flores noted that when “[students] get the diploma, they’ll more likely get a job” (Hensley, Galilee-Belfer, & Lee, 2013, p. 564), a response that reflects the view that benefits of education are typically private, not public.

The original text used “they,” which has been replaced by “students” above.

Some of the more common changes occur when the essay writer wants to draw special attention to a passage by italicizing the words. This is permitted as long as the change is noted in the citation.

The APA's *Publication Manual* (2010) states that “the first letter of the first word in a quotation may be changed *to an uppercase or a lowercase letter*” without noting this change in the citation (p. 172, emphasis added).

An interpolation can also mark a mistake in the original. Adding the Latin word *sic* (meaning “thus,” an abbreviated form of the phrase “*sic erat scriptus*,” “thus was it written”) italicized in square brackets indicates that that the error was made by the original writer.

Wang, Koh, Song, & Hou (2015) hypothesized that “compared with their Asian American counterparts, European American adults and children would endorse more self, social and emotion regulation functions and less [*sic*] directive functions” (p. 28).

Note: Because “functions” is a countable noun, it **should be** modified by “fewer,” rather than “less.”

Ellipsis Within a Sentence

Omissions of portions of the original are marked by three spaced periods (ellipsis points), as in the passage below:

Aldiabat and Le Navenec (2014) warned, “As the health care system has become more complicated . . . investing in nursing students to take a role in health education for rural older adults is not only necessary, it is imperative” (p. 477).

Here, a short phrase has been omitted.

Ellipsis Involving at Least Two Sentences

To appreciate how this kind of omission works, consider first this passage from Bennet B. Murdock, Jr.'s *Human Memory: Theory and Data*:

The problem of serial order is basically the problem of how the brain encodes, stores, and retrieves strings of items presented in a temporally-ordered format. Or, more briefly, the concern is for one aspect of the problem of the temporal format of storage. How is temporal information represented in memory? (p. 139).

If the second sentence is unnecessary for your purposes, but you wish to include the third, you

could omit it this way:

Murdock (1974) explained, “the problem of serial order is basically the problem of how the brain encodes, stores, and retrieves strings of items presented in a temporally-ordered format. . . . How is temporal information represented in memory?” (p. 139).

Note: Those four dots are actually a period plus three ellipsis points. APA does not “use ellipsis points at the beginning or end of any quotation unless, to prevent misinterpretation, you need to emphasize that the quotation begins or ends in midsentence” (p. 173). Note also that the first *t* in *the* has been silently changed from uppercase to lowercase.

Quotation Within Quotation

In some situations, quotations may contain passages enclosed in double quotation marks. In such a case, use single quotation marks if the quotation is short (and thus already enclosed in double quotation marks):

Part of the reason for the intractability of the subject, Assundani et al. (2013) noted, is that “ethics is in the ‘eye of the beholder’” (p. 105).

Note that the single quotation marks close first, and then the double quotation marks.

For a block quotation, simply retain the double quotation marks:

Assundai et al. (2011) chose two fundamental axes in developing their model of ethical standards:

Idealism and relativism actually represents [*sic*] two independent ethical dimensions, where idealism represents the extent to which one idealistically assumes that desirable consequences can always be obtained when the “right” action is chosen, and relativism represents the degree to which one rejects relying on universal moral rules when making decisions. (p. 106)

Note: The singular form of the verb “represents” has been incorrectly used here, and so is marked by [*sic*].

References

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