

THE MECHANICS PAGE

- A) Types of 'Mechanical Errors': List + 1 exercise
- B) Quotation, Paraphrase, & Summary: Definition and Examples
- C) 3 Paraphrase Exercises: Discussion, Examples, Exercises
- D) Introduction: Quotation & Quoting
- E) Three Quotation Workshops: Discussion, Examples, Exercises

'Mechanical' Errors: Types

'Mechanics' refers to aspects of writing NOT concerned with meaning, and NOT subject to grammatical rules. Here are some 'mechanical issues' academic writers must be aware of:

- paragraphing/indentation
- capitalization/non-capitalization
- punctuation
- quotations
- documentation
- spelling
- formatting/appearance

Below is a paragraph about George Orwell's famous essay, "Politics and the English Language". The grammar is 100% correct, and the content is coherent; however, the passage has many 'mechanical' errors. Please rewrite the paragraph correctly.

in politics And the enlish language. One of the most famous. Essays written in the twentieth sentury: "george, orwell" suggests that

Politikians use language to deceive. People political speech and, writing He. Says are largely the defense of the indefensible paragraph 10— ohwell gives many examples. of, typical Expresions, that, politicians Use to hide; The Truth.

he mentions. Words and Phrases such as, Pacification. 'rectification' of frontears—transfer, of population. And Elimination. of, unreliable elements.

Pointing out.

That such phrases invariably hide an Indefensble Reality.

QUOTATION, PARAPHRASE & SUMMARY

In much of the writing that you do at college and university, you need to gather information from various written sources. The three basic ways of integrating this information into your own writing are:

- *quotation*
- *paraphrase*
- *summary*

QUOTATION: A quotation *reproduces exactly the language of the source, within quotation marks*. Mostly, you should not quote entire sentences: you should select the part of the sentence you need, and integrate that into your sentence.

PARAPHRASE: A paraphrase *restates, in your own words, the content of a sentence/passage*. A paraphrase must be a complete sentence/passage, and must not change the sense of the original passage. A paraphrase will be approximately the same length as the original sentence/passage. If you paraphrase someone else's ideas, you **MUST** acknowledge the source.

SUMMARY: There are two kinds of summary. A **'descriptive'** summary, which follows and identifies the structure of the text. An **'informational'** summary does not necessarily follow the structure of the text. It identifies the main ideas, and arranges them according to their importance, regardless of where they appear in the text. An effective **informational** summary will

- demonstrate full understanding of the passage being summarized
- prioritize the passage's ideas in order of importance
- leave out irrelevant/unimportant details

re: PLAGIARISM: When you incorporate other people's ideas into your writing, you **MUST** acknowledge your sources. *Expressing other people's ideas without citing the source is called plagiarism; reproducing more than five of a text's words in sequence is also called plagiarism*: this is a serious academic offense, and will lead to failure or expulsion if discovered.

consider this passage:

The Native American groups which, despite all obstacles, have developed traditions of literacy in their own languages seem to share certain characteristics. All of them, of course, have preserved some sort of social organization, at least at the community level. It would seem that such groups have also found one or more functions for their own literacy. The spread of Fox, Winnebago, Cherokee, and Mohican literacy occurred at the same time that these several tribes were divided by migrations. In all four cases, it seems reasonable to suppose that the first individuals to become literate were motivated by a desire to communicate with relatives who had departed for the west or, as the case may be, had lingered behind in the east.

source: John Smith, The St. John's Guide to Writing, New York, N.Y.
St. John's Press, 1993, p.16.

...one possible summary (informational) of whole passage...

Some Native American groups have created their own writing system in specific situations for specific purposes; one of main purposes has been to keep in touch with family members separated by migrations.

...one possible paraphrase of last sentence....

The evidence suggests that the individuals in all four groups who achieved literacy felt the same urge to stay in contact with family members far away in the west, or left behind in the east.

...one possible quotation from the passage.....

In order to explain the rise of literacy among certain Native American groups, Smith points out that four groups—the Fox, Winnebago, Cherokee and Mohican groups—were all “divided by migrations”, and were “motivated by a desire to communicate with relatives” who had dispersed to various regions (Smith, p. 16).

PARAPHRASING #1: If you **paraphrase** a passage or a statement, you express the same idea *in your own words*. A paraphrase is approximately as long as the original passage. Paraphrasing is important because *it demonstrates comprehension: in order to paraphrase a passage, you must understand it*. In addition, *paraphrasing helps a writer avoid over-quoting*. Here is a simple example of paraphrase:

original: *Rereading the novel leads the reader to a brand new interpretation.*

paraphrase: *If you read the novel a second time, you will interpret it differently.*

key points:

- a paraphrase contains the same idea as the original statement
- a paraphrase keeps the same logical relationships as original
- a paraphrase is more or less the same length as the original
- an effective paraphrase usually requires a new sentence structure

n.b. *A paraphrase that uses five or more words of the original text in sequence is guilty of **plagiarization** (= academic 'crime')*

...a few more examples of paraphrase...

original: **Just as a word has a variety of connotations, so also it may have more than one denotation.**

paraphrase: *Some words have various denotations; similarly, some words have multiple connotations.* [key relationship: similarity]

original: **Edith Wharton's writing is saturated with a sense of alienation, but in her private life, she was highly sociable and outgoing.**

paraphrase: *Despite her outgoing, sociable personality, Edith Wharton's books often deal with the theme of alienation.* [key relationship: contrast]

...using your own words, paraphrase the sentences below; think about logical relationships, and try to use a different grammatical structure....

1. For many people, to speak the truth is not always the easiest thing in the world.
2. Hearing of her father's death unexpected death, Mary fell into a deep depression.
3. Explaining differences between cultures seems to be an easy matter, but this is not always the case.
4. The explorers, despite being exhausted by the harsh conditions and lack of food, pushed on toward their destination.
5. To say that I am rich would be an exaggeration.
6. Without support from their families, and a strong character, many first-year university students experience difficulties.
7. The computer, once considered an exciting innovation, is now a fact of everyday life.
8. Not having understood the exam instructions, John performed miserably.
9. Thrown onto the market in the 1980's, VCR's gobbled up a large chunk of the money consumers spent on entertainment.

PARAPHRASING #2: Paraphrasing Proverbs....

Proverbs are well-known, short statements that contain a meaning, or a 'moral'. Below, you'll find a number of common proverbs, or 'sayings'. Your task is to consider the underlying meaning of the proverb, and then to paraphrase it in your own words. Most of the meanings should be clear, although you may have to think about a few of them.

Here is one common proverb:

- **A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.**

Basically, this means that something you really possess (1 'bird in the hand') is worth twice as much as something you don't possess (2 birds 'in the bush') . Here is one way you could paraphrase the idea:

- 1) *What you have is twice as valuable as what you don't have.*

You could also state this idea a little more generally:

- 2) *Focus on what you have, not on what you don't have.*

The words of these two paraphrases are different, but both mean more or less the same thing; both satisfactorily communicate the basic idea of the proverb.

Here is another common proverb:

- **Absence makes the heart grow fonder.**

The idea here is that when we are not with someone we love, we grow more fond of that person. Here are two of many possible paraphrases:

- 1) *Being away from loved ones makes us love them more.*
- 2) *We love more from a distance.*

Below you will find some common proverbs/sayings. Try to figure out the basic idea (*on your own, if possible*), and then paraphrase that idea. Don't worry about being too exact; just try to catch the key idea. Proverbs are 'concentrated' statements, so your paraphrases may be a little longer than the proverb, but try to keep them as short as possible.....

...some common proverbs...

1. All that glitters is not gold.

paraphrase: _____

2. Better to be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion.

paraphrase: _____

3. Don't dig your grave with your own knife and fork.

paraphrase: _____

4. Empty vessels make the most noise.

paraphrase: _____

5. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

paraphrase: _____

6. Honey catches more flies than vinegar.

paraphrase: _____

7. Hunger is a good sauce.

paraphrase: _____

8. In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.

paraphrase: _____

9. One man's meat is another man's poison.

paraphrase: _____

PARAPHRASING #3: Advanced... Read the following sentences, which mostly relate to George Orwell's essay, "Politics and the English Language". Identify the essential meaning, and then express it in your own words. Please rearrange the structure if you need to, and cut any unnecessary words. Think carefully about logical relationships and key subjects....

original: **In order to maintain power, it's necessary for politicians to lie.**

paraphrase: **Politicians must lie so that they can hold on to power.**

[key relationship: purpose]

Paraphrase the sentences below; keep the same meaning and logical relationship. Try to use a different grammatical structure. You may use individual words from original sentence, but do not copy more than five words in sequence. There are various possibilities here.

1. The language of political speeches may be boring and clichéd, but it is never meaningless. *[key relationship: contrast]*

2. According to George Orwell, euphemisms are used by leaders in order to hide the truth. *[purpose]*

3. George Orwell's ability to identify the techniques used by political leaders to deceive the citizenry, clearly illustrates that he had a brilliant intellect. *[example/illustration]*

4. When there is a gap between a politician's words and his intentions, the politician turns naturally to vague, wordy language and clichéd phrases that are intended obscure his real meaning. *[time/condition]*

5. Some think that defending the English language means preserving useless rules; others think it means communicating ideas clearly and concisely. *[alternative]*

6. If a person is not very conscious of how language is used by politicians, it will be very difficult for him to distinguish between hard facts and political propaganda. *[condition]*

7. While it's true that a person who doesn't think clearly won't be able to write clearly, it's equally true that a person who doesn't write clearly won't be able to think clearly. *[contrast]*

8. Many people believe new innovations in digital communication have led to a better informed citizenry; it's clear, however, that such innovations mainly provide new ways for corporations to distribute advertising, while distracting people from the key political decisions. *[contrast/time]*

9. Dictators like to keep the citizenry frightened, because people who are frightened don't think clearly, and can be tricked into accepting all kinds of absurdities. *[cause/effect]*

10. When you don't understand a person's words, it is unwise to trust that person. *[time/condition]*

QUOTATION & QUOTING: Introduction

Most English 100 students know they are expected to use quotation in literary analysis, but not all know why. *It is important to understand the general function of quotation; if one doesn't, it will be very hard to quote effectively.*

Unlike creative forms of writing like poetry and fiction, analysis and argument are **non-fiction**—that is, they convey real ideas about the real world. A journalist might write an essay analyzing a political scandal; a sociologist might consider the role of digital technology in our lives; an English student might express ideas about a story by Ernest Hemingway, the famous American author. Journalist, sociologist and student are all communicating 'real' ideas/opinions about specific topics.

Let's imagine a journalist discussing a political scandal—he proposes that the scandal began when the Prime Minister lied about his past. If the journalist does not support this idea with a quote, alert readers will begin to wonder: *Did the Prime Minister lie? When? What did he lie about about? How does the journalist know it was a lie?* If the journalist wants to be taken seriously (and avoid being sued for slander), he **MUST** provide supporting quotes. Perhaps the Prime Minister said one thing in a speech to Parliament, and then said exactly the opposite in a newspaper interview. If the journalist provides both quotes, precisely identifying the time and place of the quotes, he has made a strong case that the P.M. did in fact lie. The politician might say that his words were taken out of context or misunderstood, but if the quotes are clear and documented, the politician will have a hard time proving that he didn't lie. If the journalist doesn't give quotes, we have no reason to take his comment seriously.

Now let's imagine a student analyzing Hamlet, the complex protagonist of Shakespeare's most famous play. After studying *Hamlet*, the student concludes that Hamlet's puzzling behaviour comes from a deep self-hatred. Many might disagree with this unusual interpretation, so it will require solid 'evidence'. In literary analysis, **the evidence comes from the text, in the form of quotations or specific textual references.** Like the journalist, the student needs specific support quotes. Fortunately, Hamlet **DOES** say many things that suggest he loathes himself. For example, in Act II, scene ii, line 550, he declares, *"Oh what a rogue and peasant slave am I!"* In line 567 of this same scene, he calls himself *"A dull and muddy-mettled rascal"*. In Act III, scene i, line 122-3, he tells Ophelia *"I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me."* A few lines later, he says he has *"more offenses at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in."* In a well-organized essay, these quotes will provide strong support for the student's thesis that Hamlet really hates himself. It is not the only interpretation of his character, but it is one that can be argued and supported.

QUOTATION WORKSHOP #1: introduction & mechanics....

In his short essay, "Work, Labour, and Play", W. H. Auden discusses the difference between 'work' and 'labour'. He defines 'work' as an activity undertaken willingly, out of interest, and 'labour' as an activity done for pay, unwillingly. (You can find full article online.) Here is a sentence taken from the 3rd paragraph of that essay:

"Whether a job is to be classified as labor or work depends, not on the job itself, but on the tastes of the individual who undertakes it."

If you are discussing Auden's essay, you might want to use this important sentence because it contains a key idea. Here are some tips:

- DON'T QUOTE THE WHOLE SENTENCE! Choose the **essential part** of the sentence you need and *integrate* it into your grammar
- Don't simply say that Auden says something; this is pointless. **Focus the quote** so that it clearly relates to a point you are trying to make
- Remember, you can 'reference' a quote in parentheses, or you can include the reference in your sentence.

bad: *quote not integrated + states what is obvious...*

Auden says something in his essay. "Whether a job is to be classified as labor or work depends, not on the job itself, but on the tastes of the individual who undertakes it" (par. 3). This appears in the 3rd paragraph.

better: *quote is grammatically integrated, but it says only what Auden has already said...*

In paragraph 3, Auden says that labor and work are not distinguished by "the job itself", but by the "tastes of the individual who undertakes" the job.

best: *quote is integrated, and writer derives an idea from the quote*

When Auden says that the "tastes of the individual" distinguish between work and labor, he stresses the importance of our psychological attitude towards our employment (par. 3).

Here is another section of the 3rd paragraph of Auden's essay. Below, you will see one possible integrated quote; please write **two more integrated quotes**; try to indicate a possible interpretation or reading of the essay, and watch MECHANICS!

To a worker, leisure means simply the hours he needs to relax and rest in order to work efficiently. He is therefore more likely to take too little leisure than too much; workers die of coronaries and forget their wives birthdays. To the laborer, on the other hand, leisure means freedom from compulsion, so that it is natural for him to imagine that the fewer hours he has to spend labouring, and the more hours he is free to play, the better.

[paragraph 3, "Work, Labor, and Play" by W.H. Auden]

Quote #1:

When Auden says that workers "relax and rest in order to work efficiently", he implies that workers place more importance on their jobs than on leisure (par. 3).

Quote #2:

Quote #3:

QUOTATION WORKSHOP #2: review + new exercise.....

Review: Here is a quote from the 5th paragraph Elizabeth Lowry's critical essay about the American writer, Edith Wharton. Lowry disagrees with the popular opinion that Edith Wharton is a superficial writer interested mainly in 'elegant surfaces':

"Wharton's reputation may be secure, but it is the wrong kind of reputation: she is routinely praised as a chronicler of the Gilded Age, a writer concerned with elegant surfaces, with manners".

A few possible quotes:

bad: In paragraph 5, Elizabeth Lowry says something. "Wharton's reputation may be secure, but it is the wrong kind of reputation."

better: Elizabeth Lowry states that Wharton's reputation is safe, but adds that "it is the wrong kind of reputation" (par. 5).

best: Clearly, Elizabeth Lowry believes that Wharton's reputation as a "chronicler of the Gilded Age...concerned with elegant surfaces" is not fair or justified (par. 5).

The third quote is the best for two reasons:

- 1) It is the most '**purposeful**'; the student makes the point that Lowry is unhappy with Edith Wharton's reputation among critics.
- 2) It '**trims**' and **focuses** the quote: the student uses only the words that s/he needs to identify the opinion Lowry wants to attack—that Wharton is concerned only with the 'elegant surfaces' of the 'Gilded Age'.

quotation workshop #2, cont'd...

In his short, humorous essay "Deodorant", Arthur Black considers why men and women try to cover up their bodily odors with deodorants and perfumes. Following the models provided above, please write three sentences that include three differently integrated quotes. Try to quote 'with purpose'. Use a simple parenthetical reference after the quote (see above), and watch punctuation.

"Not surprisingly, our passion for aromatic disguise and deceit has given rise to a multi-million dollar industry. All over the world, platoons of chemists and social psychologists spend their working hours decanting tubes full of essences and calibrating secretions in a never ending search for the perfect perfume molecule—the one of which a little dab will tell our colleagues that we are lovable, trustworthy, charismatic, and altogether irresistible." [paragraph 3, "Deodorant", by Arthur Black]

1. Black's comment that "our passion for aromatic disguise" supports a "multi-million dollar industry" suggests that the huge profits of the perfume makers really depend on our urge to trick others into thinking we smell sweeter than we really do (par. 3).

2.

3.

QUOTATION WORKSHOP #3: Advanced: Contextualizing Quotes

In practice, effective quotation usually requires more than a single sentence. It is important to 'set up' the quote—that is, to contextualize it so that the reader can follow the *line-of-argument*. After giving the quote, it is even more important to analyze the quote, showing how it relates to writer's idea. So...

Step 1: *The writer prepares the reader for the quote.*

Step 2: *The writer provides the quote.*

Step 3: *The writer uses the quote, showing how it supports his/her thesis.*

To repeat, the 3rd step is really the most important part of effective quotation. If the student does not show how the quote supports an idea, s/he's wasting time, both his and the reader's. *Repeating what someone else has said means nothing itself*. The writer's real job is to show how the quote relates to the overall idea of the essay. This can take a few sentences, or even a full paragraph.

Imagine you are asked to analyze the character of Babette, the little girl in Kate Chopin's short story, "Ripe Figs". You decide that the simile in par. 3 connecting Babette to a hummingbird is significant because it reveals part of her character. Here is one way to set up and interpret the quote:

Babette is the young protagonist of Kate Chopin's "Ripe Figs". It's a very short story, so we don't get a lot of information about her. However, in paragraph 3, we learn that she is "as restless as a hummingbird". This simile is quite interesting. It suggests that Babette is, like a hummingbird, both cute and hyperactive. It also suggests that she is as much a part of nature as the hummingbird. This means that she must, like the hummingbird, follow the natural rhythm of nature, even if her restless, impatient personality makes this difficult.

Notice that the quote is actually very short—it's only a 5 words phrase—but the whole passage contains around 90 words, most of which focus on drawing meaning out of the short quote. This is appropriate. We do not quote simply to quote; we quote to make points and defend arguments; the emphasis needs to be on developing one's interpretation of the given quote.

SUMMARIES & SUMMARIZING:

Summarizing texts is an essential academic skill. A summary reflects a student's ability

- *to understand the key ideas of a text*
- *to distinguish details from ideas*
- *to express ideas in clear concise language*

To repeat, summaries focus on the key idea(s) of a passage; they do not concern themselves with the specific details supporting these ideas. There are no specific rules regarding the length of summaries, but generally they should be at least 75% shorter than the original. If you have a text of 100 words, you should be able to summarize the key idea in no more than 25 words. If you have a text of 4 pages, you should need no more than 1 page to summarize the essentials.

It's possible to distinguish two types of summaries: *descriptive summaries* and *informative summaries*. Mostly we will be concerned with informative summaries, but descriptive summaries serve a particular purpose.

descriptive summaries vs. informative summaries

- Descriptive summaries 'describe' structure/development.
- Informative summaries identify key content

To illustrate, let's imagine a 600 word opinion piece published on the Op-Ed page of The Vancouver Sun. The writer begins the article by discussing the hardships of two families negatively affected by the tax policy, including names and specific dollar amounts. He doesn't directly state his thesis until the 4th paragraph. After this, he gives some suggestions about how the government could improve the tax policy.

A *descriptive summary* follows the structure/development of a text: in this case, it would point out that the author begins with two examples that support his thesis (*without repeating details!*) It would indicate that the writer gives his thesis in the middle of the article, and that the writer concludes by proposing some solutions.

An *informative summary* focuses on key content (or 'information') more than on structural development. It would begin with the main idea—the tax policy is bad. It would identify the key reasons the writer doesn't like the tax, and then mention the proposed solutions.