University Writing

Quoting, Paraphrasing, Summarizing and Patchwriting

What are the differences among quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing and patchwriting?

Quoting, paraphrasing and summarizing are three ways of incorporating other writers' work into your own writing. Each method differs according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing. Patchwriting is an additional way to incorporate other writers' work into your own, but it is actually a form of plagiarism. Though patchwriting may seem like an "innocent mistake," and is a serious academic offense and is treated as such.

Quotations must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author.

Paraphrasing involves putting a passage from source material completely into your own words. If there are technical or specialized terms, those may appear in quotes. The sentences in your paraphrase must also have a different structure from those in the original. It must include the most important information from the passage and represent the author's intended meaning or point of view. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly, but it may often follow the original source's sequencing. **A paraphrase must be attributed to the original source.**

Summarizing involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material. However, in the case of the summary, examples and illustrations are omitted. **A summary must be attributed to the original source, though they generally don't need in-text citations unless you're summarizing something very short. If you're summarizing a novel, for example, you would have to include the relevant publication information in your bibliography, but you couldn't cite specific pages because you'd essentially be citing the whole book.**

Patchwriting is a style of writing that uses sections of verbatim copied text often from a variety of sources, linked together with additional sentences or with a few words or phrases switched out out. Work of this nature is considered plagiarism unless all directly quoted text is indicated (with quotation marks, indents, italics etc.) and appropriately cited. Students often resort to patchwriting when they don't understand the text they're working with well enough to paraphrase or summarize.

Some examples to compare

The original passage:
Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes. Lester, James D. Writing Research Papers. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.

A legitimate paraphrase:
In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester 46-47).

An acceptable summary:
Students should take just a few notes in direct quotation from sources to help minimize the amount of quoted material in a research paper (Lester 46-47).

A patchwritten version:
Students often use to many direct quotation in when notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in their paper. Probably only about 10% of your final paper should be direct quotations. You should try to contain the amount of exact transcribing of sources while taking notes. (Lester 46-47).

A plagiarized version:
Students often use too many direct quotations when they take notes, resulting in too many of them in the final research paper. In fact, probably only about 10% of the final copy should consist of directly quoted material. So it is important to limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes.

You may think that if you paraphrase someone else's words, they become your words, and you don't need to cite them. This is not true. A paraphrase is your version of someone else's ideas or words and must be cited.

Steps to Effective Summary
1. Highlight the thesis or main idea of the passage you're working with.
2. Identify the portions of the text that support the main idea; underline these sections.
3. Put the original out of sight when you write your paraphrase so you're not tempted to copy it directly.
4. Rephrase the main points into your own sentences, but remember to reflect the purpose and message of the original. It's usually not necessary to include examples and details.
5. Create a thesis that explains the key ideas of the original. Don't just restate the thesis; instead, form your own. This will help you re-create the meaning of the original so that it makes sense for you.
6. To avoid plagiarizing, be sure not only to rewrite the thesis in your own words, but also to change the structure of the sentences, substitute synonyms for key terms, eliminate jargon, remove extraneous details or examples, and condense information to reflect the essence of the original text.
7. As a general rule, make a summary five to ten percent the length of the original.
8. When integrating a summary into your text, let your readers know that the information you're presenting isn't your own by introducing the name of the author(s) or source of the summarized material: "In their research on plant diseases, Doe and Deer found that . . ." or "According to a recent article in *The New York Times* . . ."
9. Remember to cite the passage's original source information.

Steps to Effective Paraphrasing
1. Reread the original passage until you understand its full meaning.
2. Set the original aside, and write your paraphrase on a separate sheet of paper.
3. Jot down a few words below your paraphrase to remind you later how you envision using this material.
4. Check your rendition with the original to make sure that your version accurately expresses all the essential information in a new form.
5. Use quotation marks to identify any unique term or phraseology you have borrowed exactly from the source.

6. Record the source (including the page) on your note card so that you can credit it easily if you decide to incorporate the material into your paper.

Please paraphrase, summarize and patchwrite the following paragraph:

Of all these varied accoutrements, none was more critical to the skyscraper's development than the passenger elevator. At New York's Crystal Palace exposition in 1854, a Yonkers mechanic named Elisha Graves Otis would periodically ascend high above the crowds on an open platform of wrought iron. As the machine creaked up to its zenith, the inventor gestured to an assistant, who cut through the hoisting rope with a hatchet. The spectators gasped in horror--but instead of plummeting to the ground, the elevator merely settled back into its ratcheted safety lock. "All safe, gentlemen, all safe," Otis announced.

Material referenced and adapted from:

"Purdue OWL: Paraphrase Exercises." *Welcome to the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL)*. 21 Apr. 2010. Web. 08 Feb. 2012. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/01/>.

"Patchwriting." *LTS Home Page*. Web. 08 Feb. 2012. <http://www.ldu.leeds.ac.uk/glossaries/term.php?ID=118>.

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