THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Writing Center

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Summarizing and Paraphrasing

Summarizing and paraphrasing are techniques you use to deal with sources within your papers. In general, you should use direct quotations in research papers only when you have a good reason (i.e., the quote contains particular language that you think is important). You should summarize or paraphrase when you want to highlight the source's ideas rather than its specific language, or when you can express the main idea in fewer words.

A **summary** recounts the main ideas of a passage in *your* words. In a summary, you need not include everything from the original passage, and you do not have to present ideas in the same order as in the original passage.

To write a summary you might:

- outline the passage to identify main and supporting points.
- identify sentences or groups of sentences that seem to encompass the main points of the passage.
- combine existing phrases to create an adequate summary.

A **paraphrase** is more detailed than a summary, which focuses on main ideas. In a paraphrase, you recapitulate, point-by-point, the original passage in your own words, and you maintain the original order of the passage.

To paraphrase you might:

- read the passage several times to understand it. Then, look away and rewrite it in your own words.
- take notes on the main points of the passage. Later, go back to the notes and rewrite the ideas in your own words.

Sample Summary and Paraphrase

Original passage:

It is agreeable to sympathize with joy; and wherever envy does not appose it, our heart abandons itself with satisfaction to the highest transports of that delightful sentiment. But it is painful to go along with grief, and we always enter into it with reluctance. When we attend to the representation of a tragedy, we struggle against that sympathetic sorrow which the entertainment inspires as long as we can, and we give way to it at last only when we can no longer avoid it: we even then endeavour to cover our concern from the company. If we shed any tears, we carefully conceal them, and are afraid, lest the spectators, not entering into this excessive tenderness, should regard it as effeminacy and weakness. The wretch whose misfortunes call upon our compassion feels with what reluctance we are likely to enter into his sorrow, and therefore proposes his grief to us with fear and hesitation: he even smothers the half of it, and is ashamed,

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upon account of this heard-heartedness of mankind, to give vent to the fullness of his affliction.

— Adam Smith, from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

Summary:
Humans are more apt to sympathize with joyful feelings than with feelings of sorrow. Therefore, when we feel upset, we try to hide it from other people.

Paraphrase:
People more easily and comfortably sympathize with joyful feelings than with feelings of sorrow. Because it is painful for people to imagine fellow humans in pain, people attempt to suppress their sorrowful emotions in front of others. This is why we fight our grief at a tragic play, and only cry when we cannot hold it in any longer. When we do cry, we hide it from other people because we are afraid that if they do not feel the same pain at the tragedy, they will judge us negatively as weak. People who are full of grief instinctively feel that it is painful for others to sympathize with them, and thus hide their sorrow.