Using Sources: Paraphrasing and Quoting Appropriately and Effectively

I. **Paraphrasing**: *Restating the ideas from a source using your own words and sentence structure; paraphrases are also often shorter than the original.* (A summary is a brief restatement of the main ideas of a source using your own words and sentence structure.)

A. Why paraphrase when writing an essay?

B. What is an acceptable paraphrase?

Read the following original passage from Bruce Ballenger’s *The Curious Researcher,* and then analyze the three versions of a possible paraphrase that follow:

As a general rule, the college research paper should contain no more than 10 or 20 percent quoted material, but it is an easy rule to ignore. . . . As a rule, jot down a quote when someone says or writes something that is distinctive in a certain way and when restating it in your own words wouldn’t possibly do the thought justice. I’ll never forget a scene from the documentary *Shoah,* an eleven-hour film about the Holocaust, which presented an interview with the Polish engineer of one of the trains that took thousands of Jews to their deaths. Now an old man and still operating the same train, he was asked how he felt now about his role in World War II. He said quietly, “If you could lick my heart, it would poison you.”

It would be difficult to restate the Polish engineer’s comment in your own words. But more important, it would be stupid to even try. Some of the pain and regret and horror of that time in history is embedded in that one man’s words (130-131). . . .

Paraphrases of the Original Passage:

**Version 1:** Experts on writing refer to the general rule that college research papers should contain no more than 10-20% quoted information. They tell students that they should write down a quotation when someone says something that is distinctive in a certain way and that restating it in different words would not do justice to the idea. Such quotations are typically difficult to paraphrase in your own words and may lose some of the original meaning.

**Version 2:** Bruce Ballenger advises students that in general their research papers should have no more than 10-20% quoted material. He encourages students to write down a quotation from a source when the author writes something that is distinctive in some way or when restating it in different words would not do justice to the quotation. He remembers a quotation from a scene in a documentary he saw that presented an interview with a Polish engineer on one of the trains that took Jews to their death in World War II. He said, “If you could lick my heart, it would poison you” (130). It would be difficult to paraphrase this comment, which means it would be good to quote.

**Version 3:** In his textbook on writing research papers, Bruce Ballenger cautions students to avoid using too many quotations within their papers, recommending that students limit their use of quotations to 10 to 20 percent of the length of the paper. Students should use quotations that stand out in some way, including ones that are memorable for their wording or that would be difficult to paraphrase and maintain the impact of the original language (130).
C. How Can You Paraphrase Effectively?

- Read the original and be sure that you understand the meaning.
- Put the original aside and restate the idea(s) using your own words and sentence structure. You can check details later, but try to avoid looking back to the original.
- Check your paraphrase with the original to verify its accuracy and to ensure the wording and sentence structure are your own.

D. How Do You Document a Paraphrase?

Use an in-text citation after the paraphrase, identifying the author and page number. If you introduce the author, then just put the page number.

- Some experts believe that technology will result in the loss of some jobs, but that technology will also create new jobs. An editorial in *The Economist*, a publication focusing on economic issues, emphasizes that technology replaces jobs, but also always creates new and often better jobs (322). Researchers from the prestigious Hudson Institute also assert that technology will create new jobs in the coming century that will provide new opportunities and typically higher pay and benefits than previous jobs (Judy and D’Amico 314).

II. Quoting: *Using the exact language of an original.*

A. How do you let readers know you are using a quotation?
- Enclose a short quotation in quotation marks.
- Indent a long quotation (MLA—five lines or more; APA—more than forty words).

B. When should you use a quotation?
1. Have a good reason to use a quotation. Use a quotation to strengthen your argument, not because it is easier or because you do not understand the original passage.
2. Use a quotation if the wording of the original is important; writers often use the exact wording of a literary text, a Supreme Court decision, or an IRS regulation.
3. Use a quotation if you want to analyze the exact wording of an original.
4. Use a quotation if it would be difficult to put the idea into your own words and sentence structure or if something would be lost by doing so (the example of the Polish engineer).
5. Use a quotation if you want the exact words of an expert or authority on a topic; the exact words of an expert may be more authoritative than your paraphrase.
6. Be sure that each quotation supports your argument.

C. How can you use quotations effectively within an essay?

Consider the following examples and evaluate what makes one better than the other?

1. Plagiarism is increasing, and teachers need to do more to help solve this problem. Teachers can design assignments to make it harder for students to find papers on the Internet or to just copy and paste information from the Internet that will meet the requirements of the assignment. Teachers could also educate students about plagiarism. “We need to do more to help students understand what plagiarism is and why they must not plagiarize” (Jones 30). Teachers do have a role...
2. Plagiarism is increasing, and teachers must do more to combat this problem. One approach is for teachers to educate students more fully about what plagiarism is. Carol Jones, an experienced high school English teacher, believes that teachers should “help students understand what plagiarism is and why they must not plagiarize” (30). With such an understanding, students would be more aware of what plagiarism is and what they need to do to avoid plagiarizing within their essays. Another approach involves teachers.

Create a “frame” around the quotation--prepare readers for the quotation and then emphasize what the quotation illustrates, emphasizes, or means. You may think that a quotation is obvious, but you need to provide necessary follow-up to the quotation. Consider the following examples that utilize both quotations and paraphrases:

- In their book on writing within an academic setting, Gerald Graff and Kathy Berkenstein emphasize the need to frame a quotation and encourage students to think about creating a “quotation sandwich.” The top slice of bread is the introduction to the quotation and the bottom slice is the follow-up. Graff and Berkenstein explain the purposes of each: “The introductory or lead-in claims should explain who is speaking and set up what the quotation says; the follow-up statement should explain why you consider the quotation to be important and what you take it to say” (46). This metaphor emphasizes the need to prepare readers for the quotation and to follow it up with analysis and explanation instead of assuming that the quotation will speak for itself or be self-evident to readers.

- Environmentalists oppose drilling in ANWR, but the native Inupiats living within the area support oil drilling because they know it can be done in an environmentally friendly way. The Inupiats love the land and consider it to be their heritage and inheritance. Benjamin Nageak, the former mayor of the Inupiat town within ANWR, testified in Senate hearings about his work with oil companies and his support for oil drilling because it can be done safely and responsibly:

  ANWR holds resources that can be extracted safely with care and concern for the entire ecosystem it encompasses. The Inupiat people will act in the same careful, caring, and cautious manner we always have when dealing with our lands. We have the greatest stake possible in seeing that any and all development is done in such a way as to keep this land safe because it is our world. It is where we live. It holds the remains of our ancestors. It holds the future of our children. (United States Senate 47)

Nageak is committed to safeguarding his people’s lands, but he also recognizes that oil drilling can be done in a way to preserve those lands for future generations and, thus, he supports such drilling.
