

Summary, Paraphrase, and Quotation: What's the Difference?

There are different occasions when you may want to summarize, paraphrase, or use a quotation. Use a **summary** method when you need to pinpoint main ideas in a written piece. A **paraphrase** can be used when quoting information from an undistinguished passage, when you are controlling the temptation to quote too much and/or when you are trying to grasp the full meaning of the original piece. **Quotations** are used when you need to support your claims with factual evidence taken from a writing passage, for credibility, and as a practical defense against accidental plagiarism.

*SUMMARY

- involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s).
- is significantly shorter than the original and takes a broad overview of the source material.
- it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source.

3 Steps for Writing Effective Summary

*PARAPHRASE

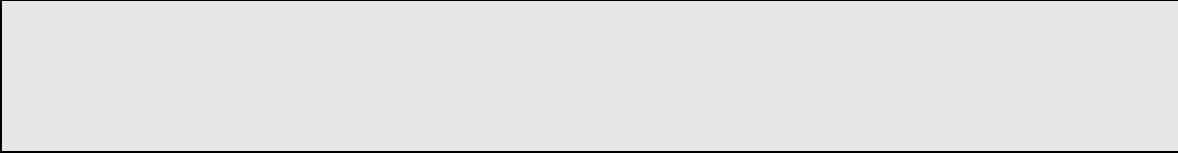
- your own rendition of essential information and ideas expressed by someone else, presented in a new form.
- with appropriate attribution to the author, it's a legitimate way to borrow from a source.
- a more detailed restatement than a summary, which focuses concisely on a single main idea.

5 Steps for Writing Effective Paraphrase

*QUOTATIONS

- an identical segment of text to the original. The source document must be matched word for word and must be attributed to the original author.

Tip for using Quotations



EXAMPLE:

Letter from Abraham Lincoln to Mrs. Bixby (1864)

Executive Mansion,
Washington
November 21, 1864
Mrs. Bixby,
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Madam:

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and peacefully,
Abraham Lincoln

SUMMARY

In a letter written during the civil war, Abraham Lincoln extends his condolences to a mother who lost five sons in battle. Describing his own words as “weak and fruitless”, Lincoln graciously acknowledges Mrs. Bixby’s loss.

PARAPHRASE

Abraham Lincoln wrote a letter of condolence to Mrs. Bixby, a mother whose five sons died in battle during the American civil war. In the November 1864 letter, Lincoln acknowledges that his words are “weak and fruitless” to relieve the anguish of such a loss, while hoping that she may be left feeling proud of her “sacrifice upon the altar of freedom”.

QUOTATION

In his 1864 letter of condolence to a mother who lost five of her sons in a civil war battle, Abraham Lincoln wrote, “I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming”.