

When we want to include information from books, articles, or websites in our own writing, we can either

- quote the original source (see *Using Quotations* handout), or
- summarize and paraphrase the information contained within the original source.

When we **summarize**, we pick out only the main ideas from the original source. For this reason, summaries are short and concise—much shorter than the original. Summarizing is useful if we want to speak broadly about a source without getting into the details. The first example below summarizes the themes of a whole novel; the second example summarizes the main conclusion from a journal article.

e.g. Naomi Lewis explores the connections between memory, loss, and identity in her debut novel *Cricket in a Fist*.

e.g. In their 2006 study, Ding et al. found no significant difference between the math abilities of male and female students.

We condense information when we summarize: i.e., we say the same thing with fewer words. For this reason, we often have to paraphrase when we summarize, too.

Paraphrasing is expressing the meaning of the original source in your own words. When you paraphrase, your vocabulary and sentence structure (i.e. the order of your words) should be *significantly different* from the original. Compare the original quotations below to their paraphrases. In the weak paraphrases, only a few words have been changed or removed. In the strong paraphrases, almost all of the words have been changed as well as the sentence structure.

Original Quotation: “The ratio of female lone-parent families to male lone-parent families has been fairly constant over the past 50 years at about 4 to 1.” (Statistics Canada, “Fifty Years of Families”)

Weak Paraphrase: The ratio of female to male lone-parent families has been constant over the past 50 years at about 4 to 1 (Statistics Canada, “Fifty Years of Families”).

Strong Paraphrase: In the last five decades, there have been four times as many single-parent families led by women.

Original Quotation: “Advocates of projective tests claim that using ambiguous test items makes it difficult for respondents to detect what is being measured and what the ‘best’ answers would be.” (Bernstein et al., 2008, p. 548)

Weak Paraphrase: Advocates of these tests argue that using ambiguous test items makes it harder for respondents to detect what is being measured (Bernstein et al., 2008, p. 548).

Strong Paraphrase: Proponents argue that it’s harder for people to manipulate projective tests because the stimuli are so ambiguous (Bernstein et al., 2008, p. 548).

As the examples above show, when we summarise or paraphrase, it’s also important to identify or “cite” the original source. For more information on citing sources, see the *MLA Citation Style*, *APA Citation Style* or *Chicago Citation Style* handouts.