

Belhaven University Student Guide for Avoiding Plagiarism

Direct Quotations

- Should be **brief** (no more than 40 words, according to APA)
- Should capture **memorable, unique language** so striking it must be directly quoted
- Should be **introduced** with a signal phrase or...
- Should be **embedded** within the student's own words
- Should **not be "dropped"** into the writing without a signal phrase or embedding
- Should be **cited** with the author's name, year of publication, and page # within the same sentence as the source material (known as in-text citation or parenthetical reference)

Examples:

Introduced with a signal phrase: Manning (2013) explained, "Like a spider web, touching one part of the organization causes systemic tremors to pass through all other parts" (p. 161).

Embedded: Manning (2013) described the spider web metaphor as generating "systemic tremors" (p. 161) that affected the different elements of an organization.

Paraphrases

- Should be **completely** reworded in a student's own words
- Should be approximately the **same length** as the original source material
- Should be **accurately** reworded to maintain the meaning of the original source
- Should be **cited** with the author's name and year of publication

Therefore, students should paraphrase only a sentence or two at a time, and students should not attempt to paraphrase something that is unclear to them. Paraphrasing well takes effort!

Examples:

Original source: In webs, leadership is strongly exercised from the center but with the aim of having everyone included and active.

Paraphrase: Manning (2013) noted that web-centered organizations focused on all members' involvement while the leader guided from the middle.

Another paraphrase option: Web-centered organizations focused on all members' involvement while the leader guided from the middle (Manning, 2013).

Additional Information to Avoid Plagiarism and to Write Better Papers with Sources

- **80/20 Rule:** About 80% of any paper requiring sources should be a student's own writing and original ideas. Therefore, only about 20% of the paper should be cited source material. If this is a difficult concept, try writing the paper without sources first. Then, go back and strategically add source material to support ideas.
- **Papers aren't about sources.** Papers are about a student's ideas. Sources are intended to support and add credibility to what a student is already writing in the paper. Therefore, avoid "padding" a paper with too many sources just to fill up space. This isn't the correct use of sources.
- **Quality Sources:** Most college papers will require "academic sources" that reflect "cite worthy" information. Most likely, this can't be found just perusing the internet because anyone can post anything. Use Belhaven's online databases for quality sources. Ask your instructor for help with the databases if needed.
- **Marking the boundaries:** Notice how the author's name was used at the beginning of each example? This was a clear "boundary marker" that indicated where the source material began. Don't make a reader guess where source material begins and ends. Make it clear with the author's name and/or an in-text citation.
- **No page numbers?** Many online sources will not have actual page numbers. Use paragraph number instead. The correct APA format for this is (Manning, 2013, para. 4).
- **References page:** Absolutely every source used and cited in the paper must appear on the References page. No exceptions! One of the last things a student should do before submitting a paper is print out the paper and crosscheck the paper's citations with the References page entries.
- **Common knowledge:** Avoid citing common knowledge, which is well-known, general information that appears in many sources. For example, it's not necessary to cite that Houston summers are hot or that President Lincoln was assassinated. Information like this isn't "cite worthy" because most people know that anyway.
- **Where do I use sources in a paper?** For the most part, sources will be used within body paragraphs to support ideas. In general, do not begin or end paragraphs with source material because good writers know that paragraphs should begin with a topic sentence and a concluding sentence. A good rule of thumb is to use and cite a source every four or five sentences (see example on next page).
- **Sources don't explain themselves:** No source is valuable unless the writer explains its relevance to a point. Make sure to write a few sentences that explain why each piece of source material has been used. It's not the reader's job to figure out why a source has been used and cited. It's the writer's job to explain it!

Sample Paragraph Using Sources

The first reason why home schooling can actually provide a better education is that it can be tailored to fit a student's individual interests; in contrast, public education can be hindered by laws and regulations. Many parents want their children to learn subjects that interest them, not subjects they are forced to learn in a prescribed setting. Keller (2011) contended that "many home schooled students feel stifled by the typical school curriculum and this actually hinders their enthusiasm for learning" (p. 17). An example of this might be a young man who is a guitar enthusiast. His exceptional talent requires much time and practice, but traditional school does not allow for that because of the required course work. This student's individual interest in music might actually wane if he is not provided adequate time to practice. Mason (2013) agreed that parents were assuming risk when they chose to avoid the home schooling option because their children may not develop certain skills that required time and nurturing. All parents know that children have different interest areas. However, the problem is that public schools do not always take these differences into account due to their own constraints as institutions. To illustrate, public schools are mandated and funded by the state and federal governments to require certain course work and graduation standards. Gonzales (2014) suggested that the onset of the Common Core State Standards, set benchmarks adopted by 45 states, was contributing to parents' lack of academic freedom for their children because these standards required very rigid course work tied to standardized testing. If a student is home schooled, he can learn academic material in his own way, freed from the confines of the public school's system. In conclusion, home schooling parents want their children to be individually educated rather than trapped in a "one size fits all" system of public education.