Kinds and functions of references in academic texts

Extensive referencing practices distinguish scientific texts from other forms or modes of writing. Academic writers refer to existing research to explain why their writing matters, to connect their ideas to existing knowledge, and to support their arguments. In this handout, you will learn about the essential kinds of references and their functions in a text. However, we do not offer guidance on formatting your citations because citation styles (e.g., MLA, Chicago, Harvard, APA, etc.) vary widely. For detailed information on the most-used citation styles in English academic writing, we recommend the Purdue Online Writing Lab's open-access citation guides. To learn more about the syntax and style of integrating direct quotations in English academic writing, check out our handout "Integrating Quotations."

Before we go into further detail, take a look at the following examples. Each conveys the same information but is packaged as a different type of reference—can you observe different effects of the reference styles on you as the reader?

Reference I Direct reference/quotation	Reference II Indirect, *integrated* reference	Reference III Indirect, *non-integrated* ref.
On May 8th, 1985, german President Richard von Weizsäcker said: "Many people commemorate today as the day when the Second World War ended in Europe. [... It] is a date of decisive historical importance in Europe" (Weizsäcker 1985: 1).	*German President Richard von Weizsäcker (1985) emphasized the historical significance for Europe of May 8th, 1945, the end of World War II.*	*May 8th, 1945, the end of World War II, has crucial historical significance for Europe (Weizsäcker, 1985).*

(Examples slightly modified from Fügert & Richter 2017: 29)

Direct and indirect references

References can be divided into direct and indirect references. **Direct references** are word-for-word copies of the original text enclosed by quotation marks, also called *quotations*, while **indirect references** have been rephrased and convey only information from or the ideas of the original author. Both kinds of references must always be followed by a correctly formatted citation so that readers can keep track of the source.

Direct references, i.e., quotations
- are employed in research papers...
  - to show that an authority (another scholar) supports your point,
  - to present a position or argument to critique or comment on,
  - to include especially moving or historically significant language,
  - to present a particularly well-stated passage whose meaning would be lost or changed if paraphrased or summarized;

- should be employed *only* if you have a good reason to do so (see above point), as most of your paper should be in your own words;
- must copy the original wording exactly, but…
  - you can add, exclude, or modify individual words in order to integrate the quotation into your sentence's syntax using squared brackets and ellipses (see Reference I as an example and the handout "Integrating Quotations" for further guidance);
- should be kept a moderate length, for the most part. Quotations longer than 3 lines of text often need to be formatted differently than the surrounding text—this varies according to citation style (see, for example, MLA's guidelines for formatting long quotations);
- are often used extensively in humanities papers but see limited application in the social and natural sciences (there are, of course, exceptions).

Indirect references

We employ indirect referencing when we want to use a source's ideas, but when it is not important that we reproduce specific language. These references go without quotation marks but are always followed by properly formatted citations. Indirect references are used across disciplines, but they are the primary form for referencing in the social and natural sciences and in genres like literature reviews. There are two essential types of indirect references: **paraphrase** and **summary**.

Paraphrase

- To paraphrase is to restate someone else's ideas using roughly the same amount of detail that they used. This means a paraphrase might be as long or longer than the original passage.
- **A paraphrase must be fully in your own words.** It is *not enough* to replace a few words or phrases—you must also create wholly new sentence structures and a new order for the information.
- Paraphrase is used when the details of a source's argument, explanation, etc. are important to your use of it; for example, it is common to paraphrase a source's argument in detail before refuting or critiquing it.
- It is not necessary to include *every* original detail in a paraphrase; include only the details necessary to make your point.

Summary

- To summarize is to reduce a text or section of a text to its main idea(s).
- Summaries must be both concise *and* accurate.
- Like paraphrasing, **summarizing requires that you recast both the language *and* the sentence structure of the original text.**

The "too-close" paraphrase, or plagiarized paraphrasing

Ineffective paraphrasing is a common (and generally unintentional) kind of plagiarism in students' work. This happens when writers paraphrase a source and borrow whole phrases or sections of sentences without enclosing them in quotation marks. Even if the writer includes a reference, **this is plagiarism** because the writer is taking credit for original phrasing and expression that is not their own. In the example of a "too-close" paraphrase below, the borrowed language has been underlined (examples are from "Quoting and Paraphrasing," U. of Wisconsin-Madison).

Text as it appears in the original source

> Critical care nurses function in a hierarchy of roles. In this open heart surgery unit, the nurse manager hires and fires the nursing personnel. The nurse manager does not directly care for patients but follows the progress of unusual or long-term patients. On each shift a nurse assumes the role of resource nurse. This person oversees the hour-by-hour functioning of the unit as a whole, such as considering expected admissions and discharges of patients, ascertaining that beds are available for patients in the operating room, and covering sick calls. Resource nurses also take a patient assignment. They are the most experienced of all the staff nurses. The nurse clinician has a separate job description and provides for quality of care by orienting new staff, developing unit policies, and providing direct support where needed, such as assisting in emergency situations. The clinical nurse specialist in this unit is mostly involved with formal teaching in orienting new staff. The nurse manager, nurse clinician, and clinical nurse specialist are the designated experts. They do not take patient assignments. The resource nurse is seen as both a caregiver and a resource to other caregivers... Staff nurses have a hierarchy of seniority... Staff nurses are assigned to patients to provide all their nursing care. (Chase, 1995, p. 156)

Plagiarized "too-close" paraphrase

> Chase (1995) describes how <u>critical care nurses have a hierarchy of roles. The nurse manager hires and fires</u> nurses. S/he <u>does not directly care for patients</u> but does <u>follow unusual or long-term</u> cases. <u>On each shift</u> a resource nurse attends to the <u>functioning of the unit as a whole, such as</u> making sure <u>beds are available in the operating room</u>, and also has <u>a patient assignment</u>. The nurse clinician <u>orients new staff, develops policies, and provides support where needed</u>. The clinical nurse specialist also <u>orients new staff, mostly</u> by <u>formal teaching. The nurse manager, nurse clinician, and clinical nurse specialist</u>, as <u>the designated experts, do not take patient assignments</u>. The resource nurse is not only a caregiver but <u>a resource to the other caregivers</u>. Within the staff nurses there is also <u>a hierarchy of seniority</u>. Their job is to give assigned patients <u>all their nursing care</u> (p. 156).

Legitimate paraphrase

> In her study of the roles of nurses in a critical care unit, Chase (1995) also found a hierarchy that distinguished the roles of experts and others. Just as the educational experts described above do not directly teach students, the experts in this unit do not directly attend to patients. That is the role of the staff nurses, who, like teachers, have their own "hierarchy of seniority" (p. 156). The roles of the experts include employing unit nurses and overseeing the care of special patients (nurse manager), teaching and otherwise integrating new personnel into the unit (clinical nurse specialist and nurse clinician), and policy-making (nurse clinician). In an intermediate position in the hierarchy is the resource nurse, a staff nurse with more experience than the others, who assumes direct care of patients as the other staff nurses do, but also takes on tasks to ensure the smooth operation of the entire facility.

Integrated and non-integrated references

Integrated references name the source's author in the text itself (see Reference II), while **non-integrated references** reproduce a source's ideas or information, but the source's author is named in the parenthetical citation or footnote (see Reference III). Integrated references bring the author of the source material into focus.

Integrated references

- draw attention to the author of a source; thus, they are useful if you want to:
  - emphasize the authority of a particular source—e.g., "Prominent physicist Stephen Hawking argued...";
  - provide relevant professional or biographical details about a source—e.g., "New York Times literary critic Parul Sehgal writes...";
  - situate sources in a conversation—e.g., "While Smith (2010) and Plum (2011) argue for..., Bennet et al. (2017) take an opposing stance..."
  - respond to or critique a source's position—e.g., "Archer (2005) maintains that... This argument, however, leaves much to be desired..."
  - extend or affirm a source's position—e.g., "Following Johnson's (2009) lead, this paper assumes..."
- may be used to make a source's role in the **scholarly conversation** clearer and, thus, are useful in sections of a paper like the **introduction** and the **literature review**;
- are a good choice for discussing or describing controversies or debates.

Non-integrated references

- emphasize the **information** being conveyed; the author is secondary;
- are often used to reference widely accepted information;
- are useful when your task is to summarize or synthesize information without needing to comment on the scholarly conversation surrounding it.

Additional Tips:

Some departments provide helpful guidelines on references and citation styles, which you may find here: https://tinygu.de/szmaterial

Literature:

Fügert & Richter: Wissenschaftlich arbeiten und schreiben. Stuttgart: Klett. 2017.

"Quoting and Paraphrasing," a handout from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center. Accessed May 2023: https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/quotingsources/.

Chase, S. K. The social context of critical care clinical judgment. Heart and Lung, 24, 154-162: 1995.