

How to Use Quotes, Paraphrases, and Summaries Effectively

(MLA Formatting)

Using Direct Quotes

- A direct quote can make your arguments more convincing. Therefore, include in your own sentences something to identify the quote—the person's name or title, or the title of the journal, book, or newspaper. This will help your reader to understand the value of the quote.
- Put quotation marks on both sides of your quote and integrate it into your text by explaining the quotation, either before or after it. That way, you show readers why they should be interested in the quote and that you understand the quote.

Note: If you introduce the author of the article (or quote), you do not have to put the author's name in the parenthetical documentation after the quote. See this example:

Example

Although Michael Phelps and Mark Spitz have both won over six gold medals for swimming events in a single Olympics, they have remarkably different personalities. An article by Frank Litsky in the New York Times describes these differences between the two dominating swimmers: "Phelps is sociable, just one of the guys, and other swimmers like him. Spitz was considered by many teammates to be detached, remote and given to mind games" (par. 3).

- When quoting what someone else has already quoted, make sure you show both your source and the original source of the quote. The citation will lead with the name of the source you used.

Example

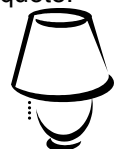
After winning seven gold medals in the 1972 Olympics held in Munich, Germany, Mark Spitz came home to the United States a celebrity. According to the 1975 book Superstars, as quoted by the New York Times, "In the eight months after the Olympics, 300,000 large posters of Spitz in swim trunks and his seven gold medals were sold for \$2 and up" (Litsky par. 24).

- Generally, your discussion of the quote should be longer than the quote itself, especially in an analytical essay.

Example

After winning seven gold medals in the 1972 Olympics held in Munich, Mark Spitz came home to the United States a celebrity influential in popularizing swimming. According to the 1975 book Superstars, as quoted by the New York Times, "In the eight months after the Olympics, 300,000 large posters of Spitz in swim trunks and his seven gold medals were sold for \$2 and up" (Litsky par.24). Mark Spitz's victory in Munich, as well as his victory in winning two gold, one silver, and one bronze medal in the 1968 Olympics, made him the world's greatest athlete of the time. His fame, as indicated by the poster sales, helped make swimming a more revered sport, especially later in his career.

- If the quote is more than four lines long, separate it from the rest of the text by starting a new paragraph and indenting the quote on the left. The citation or footnote appears at the end of the quote.



Summarizing a Passage

- When you want to include a long passage, summarize most of it and quote only the most important sentences or phrases.
- Using the information in the original passage, condense the passage so that the key information remains. The summary of the original text should be about one fourth the length of the original text.

Original Text from Source

In the 200-meter freestyle, the best in the field were Spitz and his teammate Steve Genter. Six days before the 200 heats, Genter sustained a partly collapsed lung. Doctors cut open his chest, drained the fluid and stitched him up. They told him to forget about swimming in the Olympics. Genter swam anyway, with his surgeon at poolside, just in case. Genter made it through his heat and semifinal, but in the final, after the first of the four laps, stitches broke. One lap later, there was blood in the pool. With all that, Genter was leading with 25 meters to go. But he was spent. Spitz raced past him and beat him by 6 feet (Litsky par. 8-10).

Example Summary used as part of a paper

At the 1972 Olympics, American swimmer Steve Genter “sustained a partly collapsed lung” just six days before his first heat. After being treated by doctors, Genter swam successfully in the heat and the semi-finals against their medical advice. Unfortunately, Genter’s stitches ripped in the final race, and he was unable to maintain his lead, losing to Spitz by six feet (Litsky par. 8-10).

Note: When you quote or summarize from several paragraphs or pages, they are stated in the parenthetical documentation. In the above example, the quotes and summary come from paragraphs 8, 9, and 10 of the article, so they are listed as 8-10. If only paragraphs 8 and 10 were quoted and/or summarized, the documentation would read (par. 8, 10). This tells the reader that paragraph 9 was not included in the summary or quotes.

Paraphrasing a Passage

- Read the original text, then to put the information into your own words. Use the information in a passage that fits your writing style and essay. Do not copy the sentence structure of the original.
- Although you are using your own words to paraphrase, you must still cite your source at the end.

Example

The 1972 Olympics in Munich were both a triumph and tragedy for the US men’s swim team. Mark Spitz, who until recently was considered the world’s greatest athlete, won seven gold medals at the games. His teammate, Steve Genter, was unfortunately not as lucky. Just days before the heats of the men’s 200-meter freestyle, Genter tragically suffered from a partly collapsed lung. He required surgery to repair the lung and received stitches. Surprisingly, he chose to compete in the heats and then advanced to the semi-finals and the finals. In the last 25 meters of the finals, his stitches broke and he was not able to win the race as he had hoped (Litsky par. 8-10).

MLA Works Cited Entry for the Example Source