

Any time you are writing an academic paper and want to use another author's **words or ideas** as part of your own work, you must cite the original work.

Let's look at exactly when it is acceptable to use another author's work and – when it is acceptable – how to use another author's work properly.

Is it acceptable to use another author's work?

There are many instances of fair use – opportunities to use another author's work as part of your own – without breaching copyright or committing plagiarism.

As a general rule, however, you should aim to produce a final paper which is composed of **more than 80% your own original work**. Any less than this and you will be able to feel your own writing becoming broken-up – a sort of Frankenstein's monster, built of chunks of other bodies of work stitched together here and there by your own words.

You should write work which stands on its own – even if it contains elements of others' work.

How can another author's work be used properly?

Any time you use another author's words or ideas as part of your own work, **you must cite the original work**. No matter how you use the original author's work, you must cite your source.

- Any time you are using a direct quotation, you must put the original author's words in quotation marks and give a citation.
- Any time you are paraphrasing the original author's words or including the original author's ideas, you must follow the paraphrased words or idea with a citation.

Direct quotation is a typically straightforward, well-understood practice. However, paraphrasing is often mischaracterized as *changing or replacing a few words in the original text*. For example, if the original text reads, "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog," then a writer may attempt to avoid direct quotation by writing, "The **speedy** brown fox **bounds** over the lazy dog." This is still a form of plagiarism even if a citation is given – it is effectively presenting a direct quotation as if it is not a direct quotation.

Instead, paraphrasing must **rewrite the original work** – give it a new form, add information, simplify, etc. – and **preserve the original meaning**. The best, most reliable way to accomplish this is to put the original passage aside while you are paraphrasing. Using our previous example, a paraphrased version of the original text may read something like, "The dog lies still as the fox soars over his oblivious head."

You should write to add new perspective or new understanding to others' work, and you should quote directly if you cannot do so.

Write what you intend to say in your own voice. Use other authors' work only when absolutely necessary, and always attribute the original author.

