

Why quote someone's words?

- **Your source is a respected expert of some kind.** Using his or her words lends credibility to your own writing and ideas, because (at least) you've checked what the experts have to say about the topic.
- **Your source expressed an idea perfectly.** Even if you spend months trying, you'll never express the same idea quite as well.
- **The exact words used by your source are important.** Maybe the specific words communicate something unique, or maybe you're nitpicking how the source stated the idea, or revealing a hidden meaning in those words. Changing the wording would lose something.

Why paraphrase someone's words?

- **The source's exact words are not so important.** The general idea is good enough.
- **The source's exact words are in another language.** Most readers cannot understand that other language, and you're not quite qualified to provide a perfect translation.
- **The source has expressed the same idea in different ways at different times and places.** Any instance would be a suitable quote, but you're mentioning it because the source has stated the idea multiple times in different ways.

Why cite a source?

- **It shows that you did a little research.** You're not just pulling your theory or idea out of your own imagination: you did some "homework" to see what experts think.
- **It tells the reader where to go to check the quoted material in context.** You're basically giving the reader a chance to verify that you're not quoting or paraphrasing the source out of context or in a way that distorts their intended meaning.
- **It shows you are competent at academic writing.** It's a bit like remembering to tie your shoes or correctly knot a ribbon or necktie: you're showing you're competent at the game of academic writing, and this will make you more credible as a source yourself.
- **It gives credit where credit is due.** In Academia, citation is a form of credit, because the academic world is a kind of reputation economy.
- **It protects you from charges of plagiarism.** If you use someone's words and say where you got them (within limits), you're covering your own butt: nobody can accuse you of cheating.

QUOTE:

In his 1927 essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” H.P. Lovecraft wrote, “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.”

PARTIAL QUOTE:

H.P. Lovecraft claimed that fear is “the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind,” and he felt that specifically fear of the unknown was “the oldest and strongest kind of fear,” (“Supernatural Horror in Literature,” 1927).

PARAPHRASE:

According to H.P. Lovecraft’s 1927 essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” humanity’s oldest and most powerful emotion is fear, particularly of the unknown.

- According to [author], _____ (“[title],” [year]).
- In “[text],” [author] wrote that _____.
- [author] wrote that _____ (“[title],” [year]).
- For [author], _____ (“[title],” [year]).
- As [author] wrote in “[title],” _____ ([year]).

(Leave out the [square brackets] above: they’re just showing where things go.)

You can more formulaic phrases for citation and quotation by reading academic English writing. It’s all over the place!

H. P. Lovecraft 1890–1937

American writer

The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.

Supernatural Horror in Literature (1927)