How should I incorporate quotations into my essay?

When you borrow material from secondary sources, don't be greedy: borrow only what you need, and borrow only from reputable sources. As you choose facts and quotations to work into your essay, remember that they must either support or contribute to your argument.

There are three ways of presenting secondary material in your writing:

1. **Quotations** are direct citations; they quote the source word for word.
2. **Paraphrases** borrow all the information from an original sentence or paragraph, but do not borrow its wording or structure.
3. **Summaries** borrow only some information from the original material. Like paraphrases, summaries do not borrow wording or structure from the original source.

The following example from Piaget's paper in *Child Development: Readings for Teachers* shows the difference between quotations, paraphrases and summaries.

**Quotation:**

In his conclusion to "The Language and Thought of the Child," Jean Piaget compares the ego-centrism of the child's language with the social focus of the adult's language. Children speak to themselves and focus on their own activities. In contrast,

... the adult, even in his most personal and private occupation, even when he is engaged on an enquiry which is incomprehensible to his fellow-being, thinks socially, has continually in his mind's eye his collaborators or opponents, actual or eventual, at any rate members of his own profession to whom sooner or later he will announce the result of his labors. (Violato & Marini 199)

**Paraphrase:**

In his conclusion to "The Language and Thought of the Child," Jean Piaget compares the ego-centrism of the child's language with the social focus of the adult's language. Children speak to themselves, and focus on their own activities. Adults, in contrast, always consider possible approval or criticism, whether real or imagined, from their collaborators, colleagues and opponents, no matter what tasks they are engaged in (Violato & Marini 199).

**Summary:**

In his conclusion to "The Language and Thought of the Child," Jean Piaget compares the ego-centrism of the child's language with the social focus of the adult's language. Children speak to themselves, and focus on their own activities. Adults, on the other hand, are socially-minded. (Violato & Marini, 199)

The example above not only shows different ways to borrow material, it also demonstrates the advantage of using summaries or paraphrases over quotations. Paraphrasing or summarizing allows you to focus on what is most important to your argument and also gives you the opportunity to clarify the original statement.

I have my quotations. How do I make them fit into my essay?

***The Importance of Context***

Make sure that your quotations function as [evidence for your thesis](http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/writing/II_2a.htm#evidence). They will fit only if you have carefully considered your strategy for using them. If you include a quotation in your essay, you must explain its relevance and discuss it thoroughly. No quotation can stand on its own.

Remember that your purpose as a writer is to have an opinion and support it, not to support other people's opinions. Using a quotation to introduce a new idea suggests that the quotation is more important than the point you are trying to make. Therefore , you should always state ideas in your own words before presenting them in a quotation.

Consider the following examples of paragraphs from our sample essays. Notice how each quotation is part of the argument in its paragraph.

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| **Example from** [**Sample Essay #1**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/writing/essay1.htm)Shizuye Takashima explores her own childhood through *A Child in Prison Camp*. Although the story focuses on the internment of Japanese-Canadians during World War II, it also addresses important issues of childhood. Shichan, the narrator, immediately acknowledges the alienation of being a child as she watches her father pack: "I, being only eleven, seem to be on the outside" (5). Throughout the book, Shichan is controlled by everyone who is older than her: Yuki scolds her for watering the garden carelessly (55), and her parents criticize her eating habits (68). Thus, she is constantly dominated even in the small details of her life. When Shichan expresses her wish to remain in Canada, she becomes even more aware that she is powerless: I feel so helpless, and wish again I were older, then maybe I could go somewhere ... It's all so senseless. Really, maybe children should rule the world! (75) Takashima recognizes that children are frustrated by the condescending attitude of adults. Children are repeatedly told that they are inferior to their elders and unable to comprehend adequately situations such as World War II.  |

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| **Example from** [**Sample Essay#2**](http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/writing/essay2.htm)Hearne maintains a strong persona throughout his text, revealing his reactions to the happenings in his narrative through his descriptive phrases. He formulates his descriptions in a way that suggests he expects the reader to adopt his emotional reactions as facts. For instance, he calls the victims the "poor Esquimaux" (46), "poor unhappy victims" (130) and "poor expiring wretches" (136) to relate his own, and incite the reader's, sympathy for them. To illustrate how barbaric and fully responsible for the attack his native companions are, he calls their plan a "bloody design" (47), he describes their appearance as "completely frightful" (124) and he says that the Esquimaux "fell a sacrifice to Indian barbarity!" (135).  |

Never distort or misrepresent a quotation to serve your own purposes.

***Technical Guidelines for Integrating Quotations***

Consider using the following words to introduce your quotations from secondary sources:

* claims
* proposes
* suggests
* argues
* questions
* comments
* concludes
* signals
* asserts
* agrees
* believes
* confirms
* declares
* emphasizes
* observes
* responds

When you incorporate a quotation into a sentence, the sentence must still be grammatically correct. Make sure there are no shifts in person or tense and that your subjects and verbs agree. Use square brackets [ ] to alter the quotation so that it fits into your sentence.

If the quotation you are using contains a grammatical error, you may reproduce that error, but you must write "[*sic*]" after it to indicate the error is not yours. You need to italicize *sic* because it a foreign word (borrowed from Latin). You may also want to use "[*sic*]" after an offensive word or comment that you are quoting to indicate you do not share the speaker's attitude.

Why should I give credit to my sources?

Avoiding plagiarism is a matter of intellectual integrity: just as you would not want others to use your ideas as their own, you should not present others' ideas as your own. In the event that moral integrity does not concern you, the University of Calgary has established a rather merciless set of guidelines for punishing plagiarists.

A second reason for citing sources is to give your readers the opportunity to find the same material that you read and check for themselves if the source is reliable.

How do I avoid plagiarism when I integrate quotations?

Make sure you **don't** borrow words, strings of words or sentence structure without using quotation marks. Paraphrasing is acceptable only if the paraphrase is in your words, any borrowed words are in quotation marks, and you acknowledge the source.

If a phrase is so striking that you wish to include it in your essay without changing it, use quotation marks.

**Correct:**

"Opinions are sold alongside soap, values with pantyhose, ethics with deodorant, and ideas with toilet paper." (Violato & Marini 23)

**Plagiarism:**

Opinions, values, ethics and ideas are sold alongside soap, pantyhose, deodorant and toilet paper (Violato & Marini 23). (Here, both the words and the structure are stolen.)

The media sells morals the same way it sells deodorant and pantyhose (Violato & Marini 23). (Although the structure is quite different, the wording is still too close to the original.)

Ideals are sold alongside bathroom accessories (Violato & Marini 23). (The structure of this passage is too close to the original.)

**Acceptable Paraphrase:**

According to Violato, the media's representations appear to value morality and commercial products equally (23). (This paraphrase is acceptable because the meaning remains intact while the sentence structure and words are not taken from the original. As well, the source has been acknowledged)

You can proofread for plagiarism by comparing your paraphrase with the original.

You should cite sources for:

* all direct quotations
* paraphrases and summaries
* original ideas
* controversial data
* charts
* tables
* statistics
* ideas that you see in print after coming up with them yourself
* ideas from your professor and fellow students (ask your professor how to do this correctly)

You don't have to cite sources for:

* facts that appear repeatedly (in more than two sources). However, if the topic is controversial, you should cite the source
* common knowledge. For example, historical dates and facts like "Elizabeth II is the queen of England" do not require citation.