

FUNDAMENTALS OF ACADEMIC WRITING: PARAPHRASING, CITING, AND BALANCE BETWEEN AUTHORS' WRITER'S VOICE

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Note: green is the author's voice, purple is the writer's voice (yours).

In academic writing there is a three-way relationship, between the reader, the authors (the sources you are using), and the writer (you). The way you use the arguments or facts from authors- sources- to develop your own stance (argument) is called source synthesis. Whenever you use information from a source, you must cite it- if you do not, you are guilty of plagiarism, which is academic misconduct. You must use sources so that your writing is objective. If the ideas were all your own, they would be subjective, and therefore less valid. The ideal blend is 50:50, i.e. 50% of the information comes from sources, and 50% comes from your ideas about what the sources say. For other considerations in academic writing, refer to the Andy Gillet articles on Uefap, here: <http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm>

PARAPHRASING: when you paraphrase, you change the wording of what the author says, but not the meaning. If you use the same wording, you must use quotation marks (""). Consider the following sentence taken from Boettcher, J.V. (2007). Ten Core Principles for Designing Effective Learning Environments: Insights from Brain Research and Pedagogical Theory. *Innovate: Journal of Online Education*, 3(3). Available at <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/171446/>:

"Subsequent principles then provide more focused treatment of these four elements while highlighting further pedagogical concepts that should inform course design, teaching practice, and assessment measures."

We could simply put it in quotation marks as it appears above, with the citation "Boettcher (2007)" at the end, but that would not demonstrate to the reader that you have understood the source. We can paraphrase it by changing the grammar (e.g. sentence structure) and the vocabulary. For example, "elements" could be "facets", or "aspects". "Course design" could be "curriculum". "Highlighting" could be "emphasising" ...etc. A reasonable paraphrase might thus be "Curriculum and assessment design, along with teaching methodology, are influenced by ideas resulting from analysis of the four aspects previously identified (Boettcher, 2007)." This is called a non-integral citation, because it is not grammatically part of the sentence.

CITING: If we wanted to show how we feel about Boettcher's ideas, we can use an integral citation (where she becomes part of the sentence) and a reporting verb: "Boettcher (2007) claims that Curriculum and assessment design, along with teaching methodology, are influenced by ideas resulting from analysis of the four aspects previously identified." Here, the use of "claims" suggests that we disagree with Boettcher, because claims are not proven. If we change "claims" for "states", that suggests that we agree with her. Other reporting verbs function similarly: "argues" suggests we disagree, "reports" suggests we agree, etc.

BALANCE: In your paragraph, you must now say what you believe about Boettcher's ideas. You might structure it thus: "Boettcher (2007) claims that Curriculum and assessment design, along with teaching methodology, are influenced by ideas resulting from analysis of the four aspects previously identified. However, it is likely that there are other, more important considerations that should be the guiding principles of curriculum and assessment design. For example, ..." This gives the 50:50 balance mentioned earlier- green is the author's voice, purple is the writer's voice (yours).

In brief, following the above simple guidelines can avoid allegations of academic misconduct, and is an essential academic skill in any institute of higher learning worldwide.