

17.57

ON PARAPHRASING VERSUS QUOTING

To reiterate, and perhaps clarify, the points made on this orally before the last paper. We prefer that you paraphrase your sources--**WITH SPECIFIC PAGE REFERENCES**--rather than use direct quotations. In general, only two motives ought to override the bias for paraphrase over direct quotation: either you find a phrase especially beautiful, or you feel the particular phrasing is essential to support a potentially controversial interpretation. Otherwise it's well worth the effort to produce a good paraphrase: it forces you to clarify your interpretation to yourself, helps to move your writing along, ensures that the wording serves your purposes rather than those of the original author, and may keep readers from skipping ahead if they know the quoted work.

Here's an example of the kind of thing we're looking for:

Original: *Bitter Waters*, p. 97 "No matter how many times we were forced to resort to scheming, we could not get used to it. ... Why were we compelled to involve ourselves in forgeries and in unscrupulous business dealings? Granted, in certain individuals, a primordial, anarchic, destructive inclination prevails over the inclination toward creative work and to order. However, nearly everyone has an innate respect for official papers, regulations, and laws, regardless of their origin. So while we regularly broke laws without a moment's thought, as if we were already accustomed to doing so, at the same time our consciences gnawed at us: Such things were prohibited. Eventually, this situation leads to common depravity."

GOOD Paraphrase (summary, really): Andreev-Khomiakov argues that managers in the planned economy had no choice but to break laws constantly, and that this assault on people's "innate respect" for rules had a general corrupting influence (Andreev-Khomiakov, 96).

You might consider the advantages and disadvantages of choosing to quote "innate respect" here rather than find a paraphrase. I chose to do so because the phrase expressed what I considered to be the key to his argument here, giving support to my interpretation, and because my effort to express the point in other words sounded forced. Note, however, that by quoting less than a sentence I still maintained control over the structure of the summary.

AVOID paraphrases like this: While they constantly violated legal regulations without thinking about it, Andreev-Khomiakov and his colleagues felt pangs of conscience doing so. He suggested such circumstances in the long run give rise to general corruption (Andreev-Khomiakov, 96).

This sort of word-for-word substitution only just barely gets you out of plagiarism (and if it goes on for more than a sentence or two the issue becomes serious). More important, word-for-word substitution does not accomplish the intellectual aims of the rule against plagiarism: to make sure that you are using the sources to support your argument, and that you are giving only the information needed to move that argument along.

In general, you will more often want to use direct quotes from primary sources, where you're focusing on interpretation, than from secondary ones that you draw on for information. Also if specific language is relevant to your argument (for instance, in answering the second topic), , you will probably want direct quotes.