

# The Portable Editor

Volume 5, No. 3

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” – F.D.R. March 4, 1933

Knowing when to paraphrase and when to directly quote a source or author is a key part of becoming a good writer. In social work writing, quotes should be used sparingly because paraphrasing shows that you understand the concepts well enough to express the ideas in your own words. Still, sometimes an author expresses an idea or thought so succinctly or uniquely that a paraphrase just will not do because changing the language would dilute the meaning. In this issue, we examine how and when to use quotations and offer a few tips on proper paraphrasing.

## Tips for integrating quotes as evidence

- Avoid starting a paragraph with a quote. The first sentence should be a topic sentence. Quotes should never stand alone as one sentence. You must introduce quotes by stating something like, “As explained by Big Author, all research evidence is not equal, “quote, quote, quote.”
- Avoid ending a paragraph with a quote. Ending a paragraph with a quote doesn’t allow you to comment on the information. You should begin and end each paragraph with your own voice.
- Citations for direct quotes include author’s name, year of publication, and page or paragraph number of the quoted material.

**Avoid the quote bomb!** What is a quote bomb? When a writer just drops a quote into the paragraph without set up or explanation. NEVER force the reader to come to his or her own conclusion about the importance or relevance of a quote to your argument.



### *Example:*

Children who have experienced child maltreatment are likely to have difficulty making friends because traumatized children often find physical and emotional closeness discomfoting and anxiety producing. Consequently, many abused children live highly isolated lives with little in the way of a social network other than their abuser. Some trauma victims show internalized behaviors such as anxiety and depression, whereas others exhibit externalized behaviors such as aggression. **“One of the most tragic outcomes of domestic violence is that well more than half of the young men between the ages of 11 and 22 who are in jail for homicide have killed their mother’s batterer”** (Edleson, 2012, p. 4). **(Writer does not explain why the quote is relevant.)**

### *Properly Integrated Quote:*

**Includes text to introduce quote**



...externalized behaviors such as aggression. **As Edleson (2012) has noted, the aggressive behavior of children who have been exposed to violence can have serious, long-term consequences for individuals and society.** “One of the most tragic outcomes of domestic violence is that well more than half of the young men between the ages of 11 and 22 who are in jail for homicide have killed their mother’s batterer” (p. 4). **What is unknown about these young victims who have committed murder is what percentage**

committed the murder while defending their mother versus what percentage committed the murder out of anger at the abuser. (Writer properly explains why quote is important.)

**HOWEVER...** Is there a compelling reason to use this quote? How could you paraphrase?

### What paraphrasing is and what it is not

- Paraphrasing **IS** expressing the ideas from source material in your own terms and in about the same number of words as the original.
- Paraphrasing **IS NOT** just replacing a few words with their synonyms and using the same sentence structure as the source—that is one form of plagiarism.
- Follow the same guidelines for incorporating a quote: Introduce the paraphrase with a signal phrase that mentions the source and explains the relevance of the information.
- **BE SURE** to **include a citation for a paraphrase**. Citation includes author's name and year of publication.

#### *Example:*

**Source text (39 words):** “One of the most tragic outcomes of domestic violence is that well more than half of the young men between the ages of 11 and 22 who are in jail for homicide have killed their mother’s batterer” (p. 4).

**Effective paraphrase (46 words):** ...externalized behaviors such as aggression. Domestic violence can have tragic, long-term consequences for individuals and society as demonstrated by Edleson’s (2012) findings that more than 50% of adolescent and young adult males (11 to 22 years old) imprisoned for murder were convicted of killing the perpetrator who abused the youth’s mother. However, what remains unknown about youths with dual status as victims and offenders is what percentage committed the murder while defending their mother versus what percentage committed the murder out of anger at the abuser.

### Effective paraphrasing strategies

1. Re-read the original several times to ensure you understand all words and intended meaning but without trying to memorize the passage.
2. Cover the passage or put it out of sight. Then write the main idea in your own words, as if you were explaining the concept to a classmate or colleague.
3. Check your paraphrase against the original, making sure that you have accurately expressed the main idea in your own words and own voice.
4. Make sure that you have not borrowed any unique terms or specific passages from the original text; common language can be repeated without being considered plagiarism. (For example, your paraphrase of the sample quote above could repeat the common language *domestic violence*, *outcomes*, and *mother*).
5. Include a citation with the author’s name and year of publication.

**Need Writing Help???**

Susan and Diane are here to assist! Contact the Writing Support Team:

[soswwritingsupport@gmail.com](mailto:soswwritingsupport@gmail.com)