

Forms of Note Taking

1. **Quotations.** Quoting involves using a source's exact words. Quoting is used primarily when taking notes for research, not for lectures, unless the instructor explicitly indicates that something should be quoted.

Four reasons for quoting:

- The quotation is so *concisely* stated that it cannot be said more concisely.
- A paraphrase or summary might not *accurately* capture the meaning of the source material.
- The words or ideas expressed are so *memorable* that they could have a powerful effect on an audience.
- The quotation *supports* a claim the person wants to make and is expected to have a greater persuasive effect than summarizing or paraphrasing that same material.

Requirements when quoting:

- 1) **Always use quotation marks** around quoted material, except for block quotations;
- 2) **Use ellipses when omitting words, phrases, and sentences in quoted material.** Ellipses are three periods with a space between each: "The only problem . . . is that the material left out was relevant."
- 3) **Use brackets when including your own words within quoted material:** "The only reason Aristotle doesn't give much attention to ethos [in his treatise on rhetoric] is that he treated it already in an earlier work."
- 4) **Use brackets for capital letters not in the original or when reducing capital letters from the original:** "[P]art of the enabling process is making people aware of themselves as writers."
- 5) **Always cite and document the source of the quotation.**
- 6) **Avoid quoting out of context.** The following is an example of quoting out of context:

"Inner-city Chicago schools seem to be doing fine. Jonathan Kozol, in his book *Savage Inequalities*, describes a wonderful teacher named Coral Hawkins:

The classroom is full of lively voices when I enter. The children are at work, surrounded by a clutter of big dictionaries, picture books and gadgets, science games and plants and colorful milk cartons An oversized Van Gogh collection, open to a print of a sunflower, is balanced on a table-ledge next to a fish tank and a turtle tank. Next to the table is a rocking chair. Handwritten signs are on all sides: 'Getting to know you,' 'Keeping you safe,' and over a wall that

holds some artwork by the children, 'Mrs. Hawkins's Academy of Fine Arts.' Near the windows, the oversized leaves of several wild-looking plants partially cover rows of novels, math books, and a new World Book Encyclopedia. (47)

And Kozol goes on to describe the wonderful teaching methods of Mrs. Hawkins."

This writer has taken the Kozol quote out of context and misrepresented Kozol's intent. Kozol would not agree with this writer's conclusion about inner-city Chicago schools being fine. And Kozol presents Corla Hawkins not as representative but as an exception. The writer left out, using ellipses an important qualification that would make clear Mrs. Hawkins' exceptional status: the "dictionaries, picture books and gadgets, science games and plants and colorful milk cartons" were all bought by Mrs. Hawkins herself "out of her own salary." Several pages later, Kozol writes:

There are wonderful teachers such as Corla Hawkins almost everywhere in urban schools, and sometimes a number of such teachers in a single school. It is tempting to focus on these teachers, and by doing this, to paint a hopeful portrait of the good things that go on under adverse conditions.

Clearly, however, such a portrait is not Kozol's intent.

2. **Summaries.** Summarizing concisely restates the key ideas, putting these ideas in one's own words. Summaries present the substance of the source material, not all of the ideas and not necessarily organized in the same way. Sometimes, we will want to include quoted material within a summary. As long as we remember to put quotations around this quoted material, it is okay to combine summarizing and quoting. Students need to remember, too, that the sources of all summaries, like quotations, must be cited and documented.
3. **Paraphrases.** Paraphrasing is a lot like summarizing, and in fact, they tend to blend together. Paraphrasing usually means expressing a source's ideas in your own words but including approximately the same amount of detail as the original and organizing it in the same way.
4. **Sentence fragments, abbreviated sentences and words, and key words.** This is the usual way we take notes on lectures. Using fragments, abbreviations, and key words allows us to get down information in a short amount of time. Just don't let your notes become too cryptic so that you don't remember what they mean.
EXAMPLES from lecture on poet and monk Thomas Merton:
 - 1940: TM – turned down as a candidate for Franciscans
accepts job as instruct. in English at St. Bonaventure's College
 - Friendships at Columbia – impt. Esp. Eng. Prof. Mark Van Doren
 - Monasticism – not oddity in Christ. trad.

- Earliest monks = lay people, not priests
- Ch. Monasticism – from Jewish prophetic asceticism

When taking notes from reading:

- Read for the first time:
 - Highlight, underline, and/or insert marginal notes (usually key words). Indicate with an asterisk in the margins lines with sentences you think you might want to quote.
 - You might also consider outlining the text you are reading as you read. This means stopping and summarizing each paragraph.
- Read again, focusing especially on those parts you highlighted or underlined.
- Summarize the reading in a half-a-page to a page.

When taking notes from a lecture:

- Prepare for lecture by reading assignments and taking notes on that reading. Bring those notes to class. Try to predict what aspects of the reading will be lectured on.
- Don't try to record every word. Use fragments, abbreviations, and key words. Don't record what you've already recorded in your reading notes; simply use a key word with a capital "R" next to it to indicate that it is discussed in your reading.
- After the lecture, meet with one or two classmates and go over each other's lecture notes, incorporating into your notes significant information they recorded that you did not.
- Combine reading notes and lecture notes, making sure to distinguish between them in one of several ways:
 - 1) By using different inks for each: black for reading notes and blue or red for lecture notes;
 - 2) By using brackets around or drawing a circle or rectangle around lecture notes;
 - 3) By drawing a line down the middle of the page and re-copying reading notes in the left column and lecture notes in the right column.
- Consider using a "double-entry" format when re-copying notes. For "double-entry" notes, you draw a line between the middle and 3/4s of the way over to the right side of the page. You re-copy your reading and lecture notes in the left column and you record your insights and your opinions in the right column.