

PRESENTING AND DOCUMENTING MATERIAL IN COURSE ESSAYS

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Students often run into trouble when presenting and documenting material in course essays. The following guidelines should help students to steer clear of any of the pitfalls that might result in being penalised for breaching academic standards. All class essays are expected to follow the advice given in this section. If you need further help, consult Patrick Dunleavy's excellent book *Studying for a Degree in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Macmillan, 1986). Plagiarism will not be tolerated, so read this section thoroughly in order to steer clear of trouble. Remember, it is your responsibility to ensure that your essays adhere to the standards of academic integrity, so if someone else types your essay make sure that you check that the typist has not changed the way in which you present or document borrowed material in any way.

Types of Borrowed Material

There are three basic ways in which students may incorporate the ideas that they have confronted in their reading in their essays: quotation, summary and paraphrase. Far too many students misunderstand the differences between these.

Quotation

With a quotation, you present another writer's idea in that writer's words. You must indicate the borrowing with either quotation marks or block indentation, combined with a footnote/endnote reference. For example:

According to Stigler, "every industry or occupation that has enough political power to utilize the state will seek to control entry. In addition, the regulatory policy will often be so fashioned as to retard the rate of growth of new firms."¹

Summary

A summary is where you present another writer's idea, only not his or her words; further, you present only the core of the idea—the main point—because you condense the idea as you reword it. You must also indicate the borrowing with a footnote/endnote, usually combined with an introduction (called a frame) that also attributes the summary. Here is a summary of the sample quotation:

Stigler argues that influential economic interests seek regulations that reduce competition.¹

Paraphrase

A paraphrase is like a summary in that you present only another writer's idea, not his exact words; this time, however, instead of compressing the idea, you restate it in your own words. Thus, the paraphrase is a little like a translation. Although it isn't usually a word-for-word substitution, it often follows the pattern of the original wording. Again you must indicate the borrowing with a footnote or endnote, usually combined with an introduction that also attributes the paraphrase. Here is a paraphrase of the sample quotation from Stigler:

Stigler says that economic interests with sufficient influence over government policy will try to bring about public policies that deter competition from other firms. They will also encourage rules and regulations that are detrimental to new rivals.¹

All three types of presentation use borrowed ideas, but only a quotation uses borrowed words. You can mix another writer's words into your summary or paraphrase, but you must show the specific borrowing in quotation marks. Here is our example summary with a touch of quotation thrown in:

Stigler says that the economic interests with sufficient "power to utilize the state" will seek regulation that operates to reduce the threat of competition from potential rivals.¹

Framing Your Presentation

Whether you quote, summarise, or paraphrase, you must give due attribution to your source, by framing the borrowed idea with an introduction and a footnote/endnote. Your endnote must include a specific reference to the text from which you borrowed the material including page numbers. Keep in mind that, in the absence of a quotation, the reference in a footnote or endnote refers only to the single sentence that the notation follows. Of course, quotation marks or block indentations indicate the length of a quotation. But summaries and paraphrases don't have such ready mechanical indicators. However, you can frame a borrowing (especially a summary or paraphrase) with an introduction and a footnote. An introduction like "Stigler argues" or "According to Christopher Hood, Stigler argues" will indicate the beginning of a borrowing, and the footnote/endnote reference will indicate the end. Then the footnote reference applies to the entire borrowing.

Framing Hints

To work borrowed material into your papers, you must frame it gracefully as well as responsibly. There are many varied ways to frame a quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Here is an example of the most common approach:

According to Stigler, "every industry or occupation that has enough political power to utilize the state will seek to control entry. In addition, the regulatory policy will often be so fashioned as to retard the rate of growth of new firms."¹

Don't rely solely on this frame, or your writing will seem mechanical and monotonous. Consider the alternatives below, and also note how the authors of your reading assignments frame their references to others.

Variations on the "According to" frame:

It was Mancur Olson who first pointed out that "unless the number of individuals is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational self-interested *individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests.*"¹

In their article, "Institutional Perspectives on Political Institutions", March and Olsen contrast the bargaining or exchange account of politics with an institutional story which "characterizes politics in a more integrative fashion, emphasizing the creation of identities and institutions as well as their structuring effect on political life."¹

The Interrupting Frame:

"Tales of monumental blunders, blatant self interest and corruption, self-destructive organizational civil wars and feuds, astonishing failures to look ahead or take any initiative in the face of the most pressing problems are," as Christopher Hood argues in *The Art of the State*, "far from unusual in most societies."¹

The Separate-Sentence Frame:

"If bureaucrats are ordinary men, they will make most (not all) of their decisions in terms of what benefits them, not society as a whole."¹ In these terms, Gordon Tullock makes a departure from the orthodox assumption in public administration that public servants act in the public interest.

Errors to Avoid

Errors in presentation and documentation range from minor ones that merit an admonishment and a point or two deduction to major ones like plagiarism that will result in zero grades and reference to the Examinations Committee.

Minor Errors-Format

On one end of the spectrum are minor errors in format. There are formats in all parts of life: don't eat peas with a knife; don't begin a bibliography entry with an author's first name. For those who ignore formats, punishments range from an admonishment to a deduction of a few points from a paper's grade.

Major Errors-Plagiarism

At the opposite end of the trouble spectrum is plagiarism. Plagiarism involves presenting someone else's words or ideas without giving proper credit. Therefore, you obviously plagiarize (a) if you present someone else's words as though they were your own (by seeming to summarize or paraphrase when in fact you quote directly) or (b) if you present someone else's ideas without giving proper credit (by failing to document at all). Punishment depends on the extent of the offense. But you should realize this: any plagiarism violates academic integrity, so anything beyond the most minor, accidental plagiarism will usually result in a zero grade for a paper, with no chance to rewrite.

Major Errors-Other

On the trouble spectrum between minor errors and plagiarism, there are other serious errors that can bring severe punishment. All of them breach academic integrity (making a zero grade possible) of them could be evidence of cheating. As with plagiarism, the extent of the error will determine the extent of the punishment.

Blanket Notes

Remember that, except with quotations, a footnote or endnote generally covers only the preceding sentence. The old student standby device of putting a notation at the end of a paragraph to document something in the paragraph just won't work. The problem could, of course, simply be sloppy presentation, or the sloppiness could be interpreted as an attempt to disguise cheating. Avoid the trouble by using the frame of introduction and parenthetical notation to indicate where a borrowing begins and ends.

Wrongly Attributed Borrowing

You must attribute the material you borrow to the source you actually use. For example, you find in a book by Smith a quotation Smith borrowed from another book by Jones. If you use the Jones quotation, you must document the borrowing as material from Jones that you found in a book by Smith. You cannot, however, document the passage as if you had found it in the book by Jones or as if Smith himself had written it. Either of these ways misattributes the quotation, and you could be accused of deceiving your reader by claiming you'd read Jones' book.

Padded Bibliographies

If you use a simple one-part bibliography, you must list only the works you actually cite in your paper. You cannot list other works you didn't cite but which you think the reader should be aware of. Listing works not cited in the paper gives the appearance that you've done more work than you really have. So how can you show works that influenced you but that you didn't borrow material from? Use a two-part bibliography, the first part called "Works Cited" and the second part called "Works Consulted." Their formats are the same.