Guide to
Working with Sources
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Introduction: Why You Need to Know This

When you entered Bates, you joined a vibrant, principled, and creative intellectual community. It is now your academic community, and it offers you the opportunity to add your voice to a lively ongoing scholarly conversation—a conversation that values, acknowledges, and depends on the work and ideas of others.

Others who share this community expect you to respect its fundamental principles as they do. The Bates College Statement on Academic Integrity, reproduced in full at the conclusion of this guide, describes the college’s principles and expectations concerning the academic work you will do here. This guide will help you better understand what those principles mean in practice, particularly for your work with sources. It offers guidance and suggests additional resources for learning these essential practices.

The Context of Academic Integrity

Every time you write a paper, give a talk, or do a PowerPoint presentation, you convey something not only about the kind of student you are, but also the kind of person. Readers, listeners, and viewers rightly expect you to be fair-minded, generous, and accurate in how you treat others’ ideas, words, data, images, and other work. Using such sources properly lends credibility to your work and earns you respect, in addition to keeping you from running afoul of plagiarism or other academic integrity violations.

At Bates, violations of academic integrity fall into three subcategories: plagiarism, misuse of sources, and cheating.¹ Plagiarism is “the use without proper attribution of someone else’s words, ideas, or other work as if it were one’s own.”² Plagiarized work “significantly departs from accepted standards in the academic community and misleads others into thinking the work is the student’s own.”³ Misuse of sources also reflects failure to properly credit others’ work, but involves errors that are not seriously misleading. Determining whether work constitutes plagiarism or misuse of sources depends on the specific circumstances; definitions and relevant factors are discussed in the Bates College Statement on Academic Integrity below. You are responsible for reading the Statement in full.

Cheating, deliberate deceit, and carelessness have no place in any academic community and are not acceptable here. Accordingly, violations of academic integrity can result in serious sanctions, including suspension or expulsion and failing assignment and course grades.⁴ At the same time, we recognize that students sometimes use sources improperly as a result of limited instruction or experience, or from having learned other cultures’ textual practices, and with no wrongful intent. Whatever their cause, problems using sources signal a need to learn how to correctly acknowledge the work and influences of others.
You are responsible for learning these practices, but it’s also to your benefit to do so. In the end, college work offers you the opportunity to discover what you think in relation to what others have said and done, and to develop and express your insights in your own way. Learning to use sources correctly isn’t important only to avoid disciplinary proceedings or failing grades, but because it is critical to becoming an independent scholar.

Using Sources Responsibly: The Purpose of Citation

A key test of proper use of sources is whether a reader, listener, or viewer can tell unmistakably what is yours and what is not. Academic work that uses information, ideas, words, or other work from others must include citations. Citations acknowledge your debt to others, delineate the boundaries of your own work, and help an interested person find fuller information elsewhere about the source. They often briefly identify authors, titles, and/or dates of sources. They may take the form of passing mentions in a talk but short notes in parentheses, footnotes, or endnotes in a paper, together with a full reference list.

Anything you take from a source needs a citation, including summaries, paraphrases, and quotations. Because academic subjects or disciplines differ about what kinds of evidence they value and what form it should take, details concerning proper citation practices and formats will differ from course to course. Ask your instructor if you are unsure.

Citing Sources and Quoting: Fundamental Principles

Although accepted practices and specific requirements for citing and quoting vary from discipline to discipline, in all the work you produce, make the distinctions clear to your reader or audience between what is yours and what is not.

- If you use words, information, ideas, claims, interpretations, terms, data, or other work that would not be considered common knowledge from a source, you must provide a citation.

- Even if you do not directly quote the source, you must include a citation for what you use.

- If you summarize or paraphrase, you must present everything in your own words, style, and order. You must truly make the material your own, and include a citation for it. It is not enough to swap out some synonyms or juggle the word order. Remember, you are summarizing and paraphrasing ideas, not simply the words. (See the examples below.)

- Whenever you use exact words from a source, you must enclose them in quotation marks (or use a block if the quotation is lengthy) and provide a full citation. Even a single word or brief phrase, if it’s distinctive, should go in quotation marks.
When to Quote and When to Paraphrase or Summarize

Quotations, paraphrases, and summaries all require citations. Understanding the differences among summary, paraphrase, and quotation and when to choose which approach will help you use sources effectively as well as ethically.

**Summary** sharply condenses a source and puts its main ideas or points into your own words, style, and order. **Paraphrase** also typically condenses source material into your own words, style, and order but usually focuses on a shorter original passage than a summary does. **Quotation** takes exact words from the source.

Accepted practices about when to use direct quotations versus paraphrases or summaries vary by academic subject. When writing up a scientific experiment, for example, it is typical to briefly review the pertinent literature in the Introduction section. This is usually a summary with citations and almost never includes direct quotations. Quotations would bog down your summary with details that would distract your reader from your purpose: giving the background for your experiment. On the other hand, because writing in the humanities frequently involves analysis of text, it is often important to provide direct quotations of the text you are discussing.

If you are in doubt about the quotation practices in a particular academic discipline, **ask your instructor**. If asking your instructor is not possible, look at the academic sources you are using. Do they include or avoid direct quotations? Take your cue from them.

There are, however, some general rules of thumb that can help you decide when to quote and when to paraphrase or summarize. Typically it’s best to use your own words and style. Remember, this is your paper. When you paraphrase or summarize successfully, a paper or talk stays in your voice, flows smoothly, and shows your understanding. When you use direct quotations, you are using someone else’s voice, and if you rely on quotations too heavily, a paper becomes choppy and more difficult to read, and a talk becomes more difficult to follow.

That said, there are some circumstances when it is preferable to use a direct quotation. How can you tell? Think of a quotation as being like a close-up in a film: Do you really need your reader or listener to zero in on the exact words of the source? Try these tests:

- Would anything be lost if the quotation were taken out? Will only the exact words do?

- Are you *doing something* with the quotation? Using it as an illustration? contesting its ideas? focusing on its tone or phrasing?
Other reasons to quote directly include these:

- The quoted text is an important focus of your paper;
- The original is so beautifully written that you could not do it justice by paraphrasing;
- The original is a definition or theory you’ll be working with;
- The passage is so concise that paraphrasing would make it cumbersome;
- You cannot achieve a version that retains the meaning and intent of the original;
- The passage contains a list or set of categories you need to convey intact;
- The original author has coined a phrase.

E.B. White reminds us in *The Elements of Style* that we must keep our readers’ interests at heart. A paper riddled with unspectacular quotations is much harder to read and to take seriously than one that maintains control by using one voice: yours.

Using Citations, Paraphrases, and Quotations: Errors and Examples

The examples below illustrate a few key ideas about direct quotations, effective paraphrase, and proper citations. The two most important principles to keep in mind are these:

- You must *clearly distinguish* between what is yours and what is others’ work, in accordance with the accepted practices of the particular academic field. (Always check with your instructor.) Formats differ, but you will always need a citation for material that would not be considered common knowledge.
- What matters is whether *a reader* (or listener or viewer) can tell unmistakably what is yours and what came from someone else, not whether *you* can.

The examples begin with some common errors, explain why they fall short, and conclude with illustrations of better practices.
First Try—How not to do it: incomplete attribution and omitted quotation marks

You include quotation marks and put a citation at the end to show that this came from Professor Margaret Creighton’s book:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Original Text</th>
<th>First Try—Incomplete attribution and omitted quotation marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If there were usually two parts to a battle—fight and recovery—in Gettysburg there were three: fight, recovery, and remembrance. White women and black residents of the borough area not only took part in rebuilding after the battle; they also served as part of the workforce that helped sanctify and honor the dead (Creighton 153–54).</td>
<td>If there were usually two parts to a battle—fight and recovery—in Gettysburg there were three: fight, recovery, and remembrance. White women and black residents of the borough area not only took part in rebuilding after the battle; “they also served as part of the workforce that helped sanctify and honor the dead” (Creighton 153–54).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE PROBLEM: Including a citation and quotation marks in one spot implies that what isn’t in quotation marks is your wording and your ideas. Because those aren’t yours, the passage is misleading.

NOTES
Second Try—How *not* to do it: omitted quotation marks

This time you include an initial lead-in to try to show that it’s not all your own ideas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Original Text</th>
<th>Second Try—Omitted quotation marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If there were usually two parts to a battle—fight and recovery—in Gettysburg there were three: fight, recovery, and remembrance. White women and black residents of the borough area not only took part in rebuilding after the battle; they also served as part of the workforce that helped sanctify and honor the dead (Creighton 153–54).</td>
<td>According to Margaret S. Creighton in <em>The Colors of Courage: Gettysburg’s Forgotten History</em>, if there were usually two parts to a battle—fight and recovery—in Gettysburg there were three: fight, recovery, and remembrance. White women and black residents of the borough area not only took part in rebuilding after the battle; they also served as part of the workforce that helped sanctify and honor the dead. (Creighton 153–54).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE PROBLEM:** With the lead-in “According to…” at least the reader now knows that you’re not claiming the initial ideas as your own but instead you’re indicating that they come from Professor Creighton’s book. However, without quotation marks around what follows, you’re still implying that all of the *wording* is your own, when it isn’t; you’ve taken Creighton’s exact words.

**NOTES**
Third Try—How not to do it: unacceptable paraphrase

To avoid quoting the full passage, you attempt a paraphrase, changing some wording around:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Original Text</th>
<th>Third Try—Unacceptable paraphrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If there were usually two parts to a battle—fight and recovery—in Gettysburg there were three: fight, recovery, and remembrance. White women and black residents of the borough area not only took part in rebuilding after the battle; they also served as part of the workforce that helped sanctify and honor the dead (Creighton 153–54).</td>
<td>If a battle usually has two parts, the fight and the recovery, Gettysburg also had a third: a remembrance. Black residents from the area and white women not only helped with rebuilding after the battle but also provided labor that helped sanctify and honor the dead (Creighton 153–54).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE PROBLEM: This is an unacceptable paraphrase for several reasons. First, it still includes some distinctive phrases word-for-word from the source without quotation marks (e.g., “helped sanctify and honor the dead”). Second, even though it cites Creighton as the author, the ‘paraphrase’ follows Creighton’s ideas, phrasing, and structure too closely to truly be your own. For example, the phrase “If there were usually two parts to a battle—fight and recovery” became “If a battle usually has two parts, the fight and the recovery”—virtually identical matches.

Equally troubling, you’ve also taken and tracked Creighton’s basic insights and her pattern of argument: that Gettysburg had a dimension beyond the battle and its aftermath: its role as a memorial—and that white women and black residents helped establish the memorial. In fact, your ‘paraphrase’ follows Creighton’s original so closely that it might as well be hers—in fact, it really is hers in every way that matters.

NOTES
Fourth Try—On the right track: acceptable summary

You decide to keep the passage in your own voice by summarizing Creighton’s ideas and expressing them in your own words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Original Text</th>
<th>Fourth Try—Acceptable summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If there were usually two parts to a battle—fight and recovery—in Gettysburg there were three: fight, recovery, and remembrance. White women and black residents of the borough area not only took part in rebuilding after the battle; they also served as part of the workforce that helped sanctify and honor the dead (Creighton 153–54).</td>
<td>Margaret S. Creighton notes that white women and local blacks worked to commemorate the Battle of Gettysburg as well as help the region recover from it (Creighton 153–54).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here you have taken Creighton’s ideas, condensed them in your own words, and cited the source correctly.

NOTES
Fifth try—The right idea: correct and strategic use of evidence

Instead of arbitrarily summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting, you think strategically about what evidence and approach best suit your purpose, and why. To use the source effectively as well as responsibly, you need to consider how Creighton’s ideas about Gettysburg relate to the points you want to make. And if you decide to quote directly from Creighton, you need to ask yourself what is distinctively useful or significant that justifies including those exact words.

For instance, if you intend to claim that the local women’s contributions were actually less substantial than Creighton implies, you might write something like this, which paraphrases Creighton’s position and quotes only one key phrase to set up your point:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Original Text</th>
<th>Fifth Try—Correct and strategic use of evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If there were usually two parts to a battle—fight and recovery—in Gettysburg there were three: fight, recovery, and remembrance. White women and black residents of the borough area not only took part in rebuilding after the battle; they also served as part of the workforce that helped sanctify and honor the dead. (Creighton 153–54).</td>
<td>In The Colors of Courage: Gettysburg’s Forgotten History, Margaret Creighton argues that the contributions of white women and local blacks have been slighted in accounts of the battle’s aftermath. They not only helped repair the community, according to Creighton, but also “served as part of the workforce that helped sanctify and honor the dead” (Creighton 153–54). However, other accounts suggest that few white women even ventured into…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here you have properly identified Creighton, summarized her ideas in your own way and given her credit for her words and ideas. You’ve also used a quotation purposefully because you’re going to challenge its emphasis.

NOTES
Frequently Asked Questions

1. What kinds of work need a citation?

Just about anything you can think of using needs a citation. Not only words, ideas, claims, and interpretations, but others’ information, data, drawings, experiments, images, music, interviews, maps, lectures, methods, statistics, PowerPoint slides, designs, outlines, plans, computer code, choreography, films, and more—from wherever you find them, including from textbooks, CDs, DVDs, and online—all qualify for protection and require proper acknowledgment and treatment when you use them.

2. What qualifies as “common knowledge”?

Definitions and guidelines for common knowledge vary, but one rule of thumb is that the information could quickly be located in multiple sources like encyclopedias or textbooks—in other words, that it’s commonly and widely available. Common knowledge is also sometimes considered to be facts, dates, and information that an educated person would know.

If you’ve seen repeated references to the information without citations as you’ve done your research, then it’s probably common knowledge within that field. If the information is in dispute among the authorities, however, it should be cited. Information that would be considered common knowledge in one field might not be in another. For example, information about the properties and behaviors of quarks and leptons might be common knowledge among physicists but not sociologists.

In general, ideas, theories, and interpretations don’t usually qualify as common knowledge unless they are widely accepted. In addition, even if certain information does qualify as common knowledge, if it is attributable to a specific individual or if you’re using a significant amount from a particular source, it’s good practice to cite it. When in doubt, ask your professor for guidance or provide a citation, to be safe.

3. Do I have to provide a citation for ideas from the professor or class discussion?

Yes. Your instructor’s lecture, your classmates’ in-class discussions and on-line postings, contributions from your study group or group project members, your roommate, your lab partner, your mother—all count as “sources” for these purposes and require acknowledgment in what you produce.

4. Besides for my papers, what other projects and activities do I need to worry about providing citations in?

Again, you need citations in just about any work you might do. Not just papers, but your exams, oral reports, online postings, lab reports, graphs
and tables, websites, conference posters, PowerPoint slides, and even some creative and artistic work require citations if you relied on others’ work.

5. Do I have to use quotation marks and include a citation even for brief phrases or just a word or two from the source?

You must use quotation marks if phrases or distinctive words are taken exactly from a source. Whenever you use exact words from a source, enclose them in quotation marks (for lengthy quotations, use a block) and provide a full citation.

6. How can I tell whether I’ve changed enough of the original for my summary or paraphrase to not be plagiarism or misuse of sources?

That’s the wrong test. Legitimate summary and paraphrase aren’t about changing some words here or there or turning sentences inside out; they’re about understanding the information and ideas well enough that you can express them in your way, letting go of the words and approach of the original and instead conveying the content in a language, style, approach, and order that are fully your own.

7. Can I use one citation to cover several sentences or even a whole paragraph of my paper?

Maybe, as long as you clearly indicate where you leave off and the source begins. The key is to make the distinctions unmistakably clear to the reader. This is often accomplished by beginning with a signal phrase that incorporates the original author’s name (“According to Betty Bates…”) or pointing toward the studies you’ll use (“Recent research has shown…”). In some disciplines lengthy paraphrases are not conventional. It’s important to ask your professor or look at several examples of writing in the discipline if you aren’t sure.

8. Can I ‘reuse’ old papers from a prior course or parts of papers from earlier in this course?

Faculty generally expect new work from you for every assignment, so you should check and get specific permission to resubmit any past work. If a prior course is involved, you should obtain permission from your current instructor. If the work is for two courses in the same semester, you should get specific permission from both instructors. The Statement on Academic Integrity addresses this.

9. My lab partner and I worked together on everything, and our results are the same. Can we hand in the same write-up?

Not unless you have specific permission from your instructor. Your learning experience is not only performing the lab, but also writing it up. You each need to write your own entire lab report.
Sensible Ways to Avoid Problems

Good habits can prevent mistakes and minimize any temptation to take shortcuts. Consider your planning and preparation:

• When you have leeway, find a topic or angle that genuinely interests you to help keep you motivated and invested in the paper or project;

• Plot out all your deadlines for all your courses and build in targets for completing intermediate steps;

• Read and take notes on your key texts so that you truly understand the material you’ll be working with. Take notes only in your own words. The more you master your source information, the more likely it is that you can make it your own and synthesize it instead of simply copying chunks wholesale or doing unacceptable paraphrases;

• Start your drafts early and do something—anything!—productive to keep moving forward. For example, begin compiling your references list when you’re stalled on your introduction;

• Most of all, know your own tendencies and consider how best to work with and around them.

Consider proactive note-taking and drafting practices:

• Find out early which citation system applies to your paper (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago, CSE) and become familiar with the kinds of information you’ll need for the different kinds of sources you use (e.g., the name of the database you used to locate an article; the journal volume and issue number for a print article; the Digital Object Identifier for online articles);

• Use RefWorks, Zotero, EndNote, or other bibliographic software as you do your research, to keep your sources and citation information readily accessible and retrievable;

• Put in all your citations as you draft, including credits for figures and images you include in your papers, presentations, and projects. Don’t rely on your memory to go back and add source information later;

• If you take notes on a computer, paste all quotations, paraphrases, and summaries, together with full citation details, into a document that you keep separate from your draft.

• Be sure to use quotation marks and perhaps flag with a distinctive font or color every time you have copied a source’s exact words; and

• Whenever you paraphrase or summarize, set the source aside and write without looking at it. Be sure to also give credit to the source in your notes or draft.
Where to Get Help and More Information

Plagiarism and misuse of sources can result not only from uncertainty or confusion, but also from personal difficulties, stress, and time-management/workload issues. The Dean of Students Office and the Health Center are terrific general resources and can offer you support.

Your professor is your best resource for specifics about using sources effectively, avoiding plagiarism, and citing sources correctly, as accepted writing practices and citation styles differ from department to department and among individual faculty members. Writing at Bates and Ladd Library Research staff can also answer your questions.

A variety of online and print resources provide excellent overviews about using sources effectively and detailed examples of proper citations:

- The library’s Writing and Citing Guide at http://libguides.bates.edu/content.php?pid=50542 has links for the major citation styles such as APA, MLA, Chicago/Turabian, and CSE, as well as a list of departments’ recommended styles.

- Writing and style guides on reserve and in the library stacks include sample papers and detailed examples of citations for source materials of all kinds. Among the guides are the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, Gibaldi’s *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, and Turabian’s *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*.

- For a thoughtful overview as well as a challenging self-test about plagiarism and citation, visit the CBB Plagiarism Resource Site at http://abacus.bates.edu/cbb/index8698.html?q=node/60.
Resources

A host of useful resources—including students, colleagues, and committees—have informed the preparation of this guide. Key among the print and online resources consulted were the following:


The Colby, Bates, and Bowdoin (CBB) Plagiarism Resource archive, found at http://abacus.bates.edu/cbb/.

Citation and academic integrity materials from Earlham, Grinnell, Haverford, Harvard, Smith, and Tufts in particular, among many others.


Notes

1. You should be aware that plagiarism policies and definitions vary from institution to institution. For example, your work where you study abroad or in graduate school may be governed by different standards.


3. From The Bates College Statement on Academic Integrity.


7. In-text citations here follow MLA style.
Appendix
Academic Integrity
Bates College Statement on Academic Integrity

Bates College is an academic community deeply engaged in inquiry and intellectual exchange and committed to core principles of academic freedom, academic integrity, and rigorous, creative thought. We recognize that intellectual and artistic exchange depend on a mutual respect for independent inquiry, reflection, and expression. Faculty, staff, and students alike are therefore dedicated to fostering an environment that upholds the highest standards of fairness, integrity, and respect in all their academic endeavors.

As contributors to an ongoing scholarly and creative conversation that depends upon thoughtful and fair acknowledgment and treatment of the inquiries, reflections, and expressions of others, each member of the Bates community is expected to use and represent the work of others fairly and honestly; to acknowledge the work of others fully and accurately through proper attribution and citation; and to produce their own work unless collaboration is allowed. Faculty and staff members are expected to meet these standards in all their work as described in the employee and faculty handbooks; students are subject to the policies and procedures described below.

In educating students in the values, dispositions, and responsibilities of independent thinkers and scholars, the Bates faculty recognizes that certain scholarly practices reflect complex tasks that require instruction and practice. Faculty are committed to teaching these critical practices. Students in turn are responsible for learning these scholarly practices and demonstrating them in all their work; they are not only a means of showing learning but of developing genuine understanding, not only the mark of an independent scholar but the way to become one.

This policy statement outlines these principles and practices, roles and responsibilities. Potential consequences for students are described in Bates College Academic Integrity Procedures on the Bates website.
Violations of Academic Integrity

Violations of principles and practices of academic integrity fall into three subcategories: plagiarism and misuse of sources and cheating.

1. Plagiarism and Misuse of Sources

**Plagiarism** is the use without proper attribution of someone else’s words, ideas, or other work as if it were one’s own. Failure to properly indicate and acknowledge the work of others can lead a reader, listener, or viewer to think that information, research, ideas, words, images, data, artistic and creative elements, or other work are the student’s own efforts, when they are not. Plagiarism significantly departs from accepted standards in the academic community and misleads others into thinking the work is the student’s own.

**Misuse of sources**, like plagiarism, reflects failure to properly credit the work of others but involves errors, mistakes, incomplete or inadequate attempts and other errors in citation, quotation, and attribution that would not seriously mislead others into thinking the work is the student’s own.

Plagiarism and misuse of sources carry different consequences as described in Bates College Academic Integrity Procedures.

The responsibility to give credit for material that would not qualify as common knowledge applies to almost all types of assignments and situations, not just papers, and not only to finished work but also submitted drafts. Work in which students must acknowledge sources and the contributions of others includes but is not limited to draft and final versions of the following:

- talks and other oral presentations
- visual aids, presentation slides, or other media tools
- websites, web pages, webcasts, and other multimedia work
- artistic, musical, and other creative work
- lab reports
- problem sets
- thesis chapters, papers, proposals, literature reviews, abstracts, annotated bibliographies, and other writing
- exams, including in-class and take-home exams.
2. Cheating

**Cheating** involves violating recognized norms for academic inquiry or specific norms established by faculty for particular assignments or using other methods, including technology, to gain unearned academic advantage. Examples of cheating include but are not limited to the following:

- unauthorized collaboration
- using materials not permitted during an exam, when writing a paper, or in completing other assignments
- receiving assistance beyond what is permitted
- manufacturing or falsifying data
- submitting the same work to satisfy the requirements of two different courses without getting permission from the instructor of the second course or permission from both instructors if the same work is submitted in two courses during a single semester
- knowingly providing assistance of any kind to another person who is attempting to cheat or plagiarize.

Fuller discussion of academic integrity, plagiarism, misuse of sources, and common knowledge is available in Bates’ *Guide to Working with Sources.*

Violations of academic integrity are among the most serious offenses that students can commit; any violation may result in consequences at both the course and institutional levels. Procedures, findings, and consequences for violations of academic integrity may depend on specific circumstances, such as the student’s grade level, educational background, and prior violation of academic integrity, attempts made to cite or acknowledge sources, and the amount and type of work at issue. Procedures and potential consequences for students are described in Bates College Academic Integrity Procedures on the Bates website.

*Adopted March 4, 2013; Effective July 1, 2013*