**Incorporating Source Material**

Source material provides the inspiration, rationale, and often the foundation for academic writing. The work of others is generally the springboard for a writer’s own ideas and writers must credit the source of those ideas accordingly.

When writing an academic assignment, you must give credit for anything that is NOT:

* Your own original idea
* General knowledge (be careful with the definition of this)

Incorporate Source Material using:

* Quotations
* Paraphrases
* Summaries

**Quotations**

* Must be a direct word-for-word excerpt
* Should be introduced with a lead-in to provide context
* Must be contained within quotation marks or block text and cited
* Use quotations:
  + To capture the exact wording of a policy, law, or literary passage
  + When the way the author has expressed the idea is as important as what they have said
  + To demonstrate a specific literary style or rhetorical technique used by the author
* Should be used infrequently in academic writing – professors are more interested in your thoughts about the words of others

**Paraphrases**

* Putting an author’s idea or concept into your own words
  + Your interpretation (not your opinion) of what the author is saying
* Not simply substituting a few words with synonyms
* Must be cited according to your chosen citation style (APA, MLA, IEEE, etc.)
  + The words are yours, but the ideas belong to someone else

Example (original text from David Owen, New Yorker, 2007):

In 1610, Galileo Galilei published a small book describing astronomical observations that he had made of the skies above Padua. His homemade telescopes had less magnifying and resolving power than most beginners’ telescopes sold today, yet with them he made astonishing discoveries: that the moon has mountains and other topographical features; that Jupiter is orbited by satellites, which he called planets; and that the Milky Way is made up of individual stars. [From David Owen, “The Dark Side: Making War on Light Pollution,” The New Yorker (20 August 2007): 28.]

**Possible Paraphrase:**

Galileo was able to make some amazing discoveries with his telescope. He made discoveries about the moon, about Jupiter, and about the Milky Way. He was able to do this with a telescope that was less powerful than even today's most basic telescopes (Owen, 2007).

**Summaries**

* Used for longer passages of text
* Describe a theory or body of work in a concise way
* Synthesis of ideas
* Broad overview of concepts

Example:

Galileo was a very controversial person at the time, but as a result of his experiments and theories in such fields as mathematics, physics, and especially astronomy, he is widely considered the father of modern science (Paolucci, 1962).

For more information about using source material in academic writing please see Dalhousie’s policy on academic integrity at: http://www.dal.ca/dept/university\_secretariat/academic-integrity.html