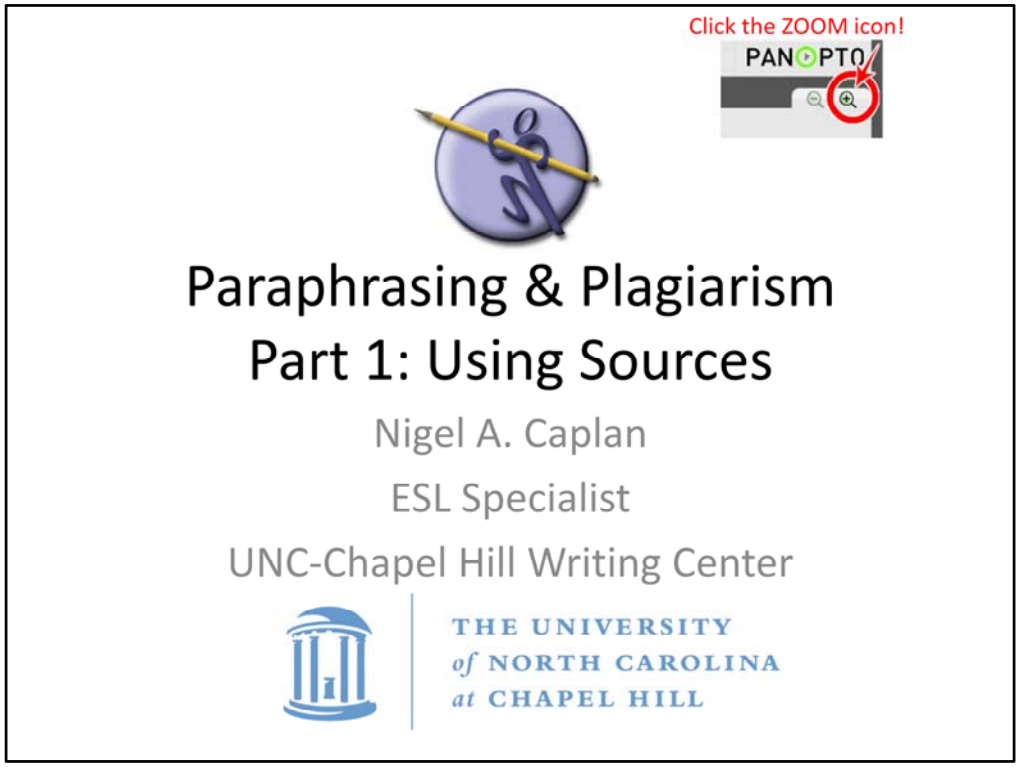
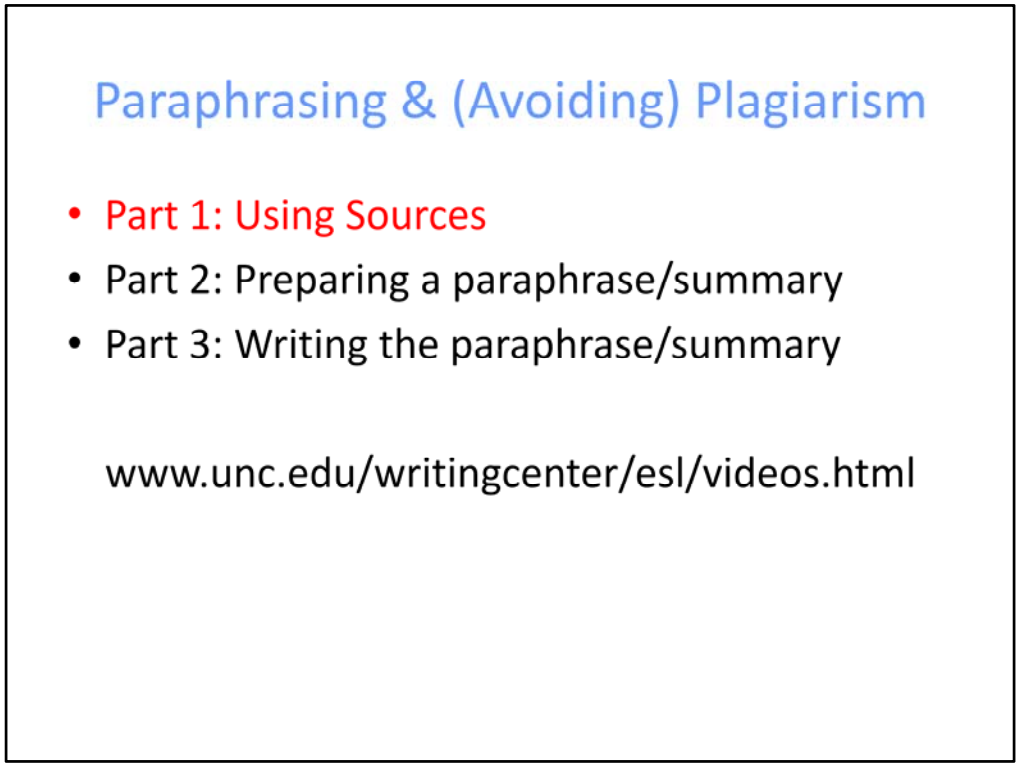
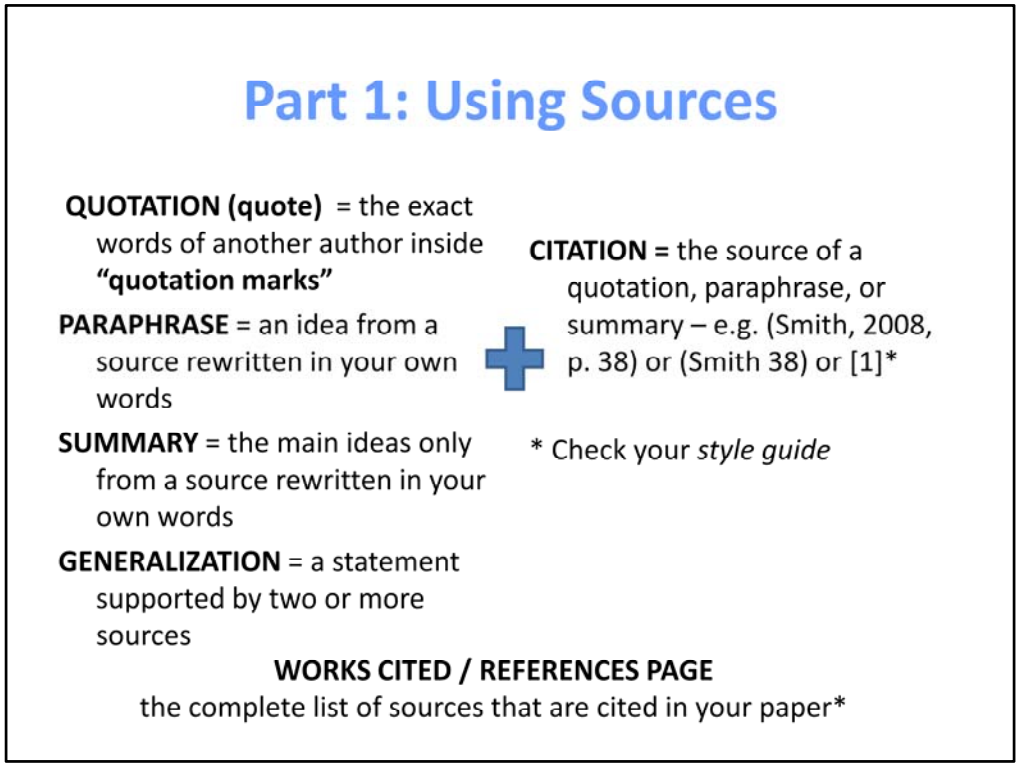


I'm Nigel Caplan, ESL Specialist at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. This is the first video in a three-part series on paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism.

You will be able to follow this presentation better if you click the ZOOM icon – that's the PLUS key above the powerpoint slide in the top right corner.



In this video, I will define paraphrasing and plagiarism and discuss why and how academic writers use sources in their writing. In the next two videos, we will work through an example of a paraphrase or summary together so that you can see the language techniques you can use in your own work. You can find all the videos on the Writing Center's ESL pages.



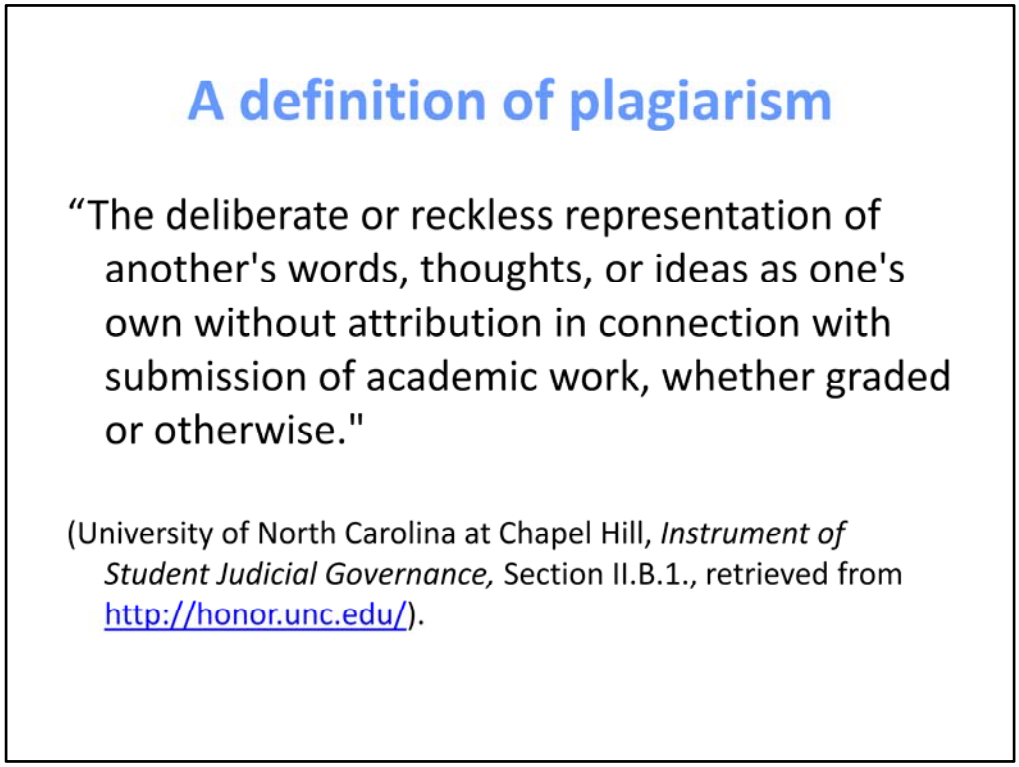
But let's start with some definitions. A quotation, or quote, is the exact words of another author (e.g. from a book, article, lecture). You must use quotation marks to show that these are not your own words. A paraphrase is an idea from another author, which you have re-written in your own words and as part of your own text. A summary is similar to a paraphrase, but you only include the main ideas – so you might summarize an article, but paraphrase one or two sentences. We'll discuss more later what it means to rewrite someone else's idea "in your own words". A generalization is a statement in your words which is supported by two or more sources.

Now – and this is important – whenever you use a quotation, paraphrase, summary, or generalization, you must include the citation. In American English, the citation is the information that helps the reader find the original source of the ideas or words you're using. Sometimes, the citation is a parenthesis with the author's name and the year of publication; sometimes, the citation is a footnote. You should check the style guide for your field of study. Finally, at the end of your paper, there is a usually a complete list of references or works cited. Again, consult your style guide. But why is this important? Well, if there are problems with your quotations, paraphrases, or citations, you might be accused of …

PLAGIARISM! As you can see, plagiarism is a bad thing. However, it is also very difficult to define because it is cultural. That is, plagiarism might mean something different in your home country than it does here in the U.S.

You may even find that different professors, journals, and institutions here have slightly different standards of plagiarism, but most would agree that plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty in which you misrepresent another writer's words or ideas as your own.

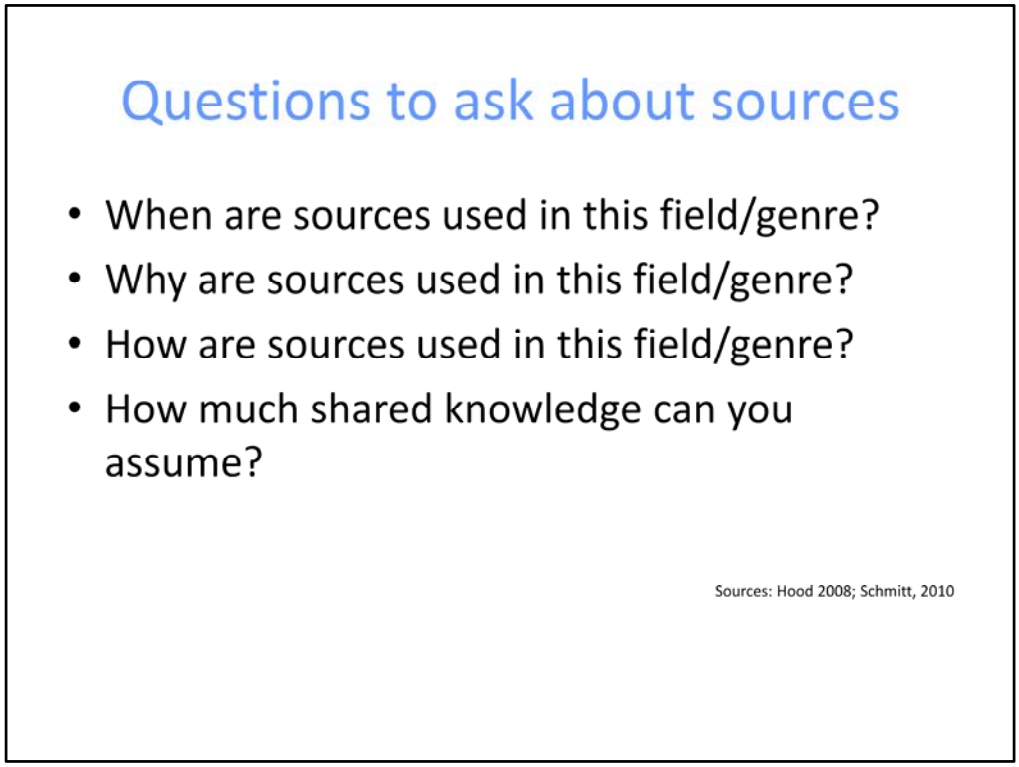
Plagiarism is viewed extremely seriously in North American universities. For example, the standard punishment for plagiarism at UNC is a failing grade in the class and a one-semester suspension. That's for undergraduates and graduates. And you really don't want that …



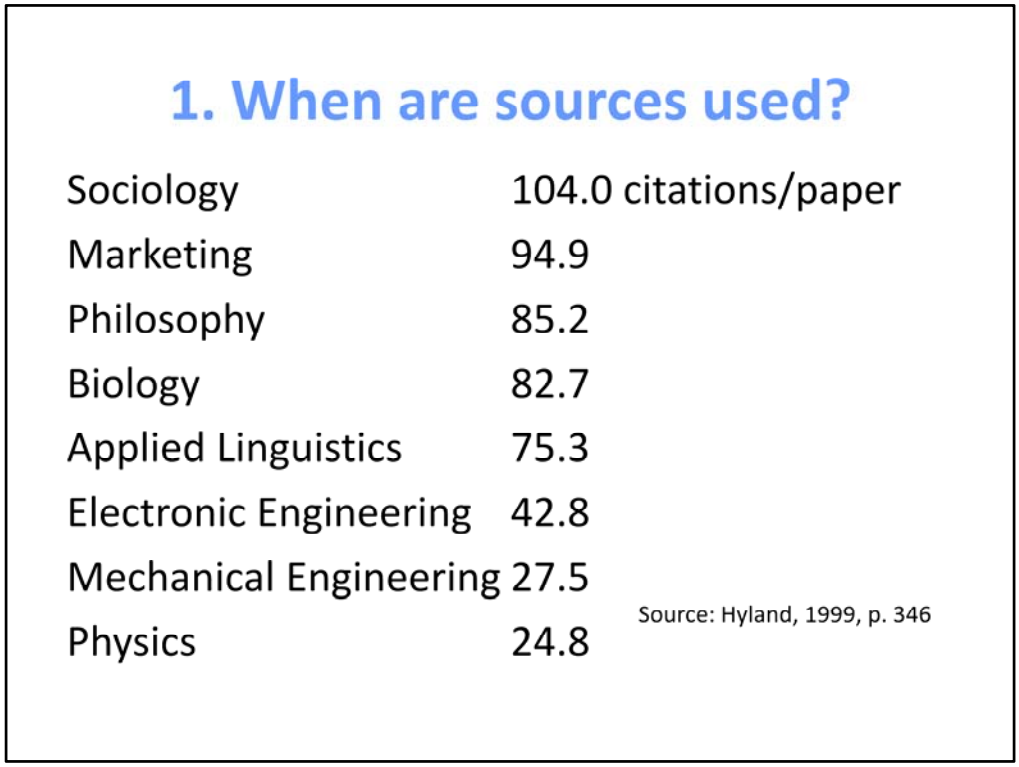
Although we can't define plagiarism for all people and in all places, I will show you how this university treats it. At UNC, plagiarism is defined as "The deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise."

In other words, every time you use the words *or ideas* of another person, you must make it clear that they aren't your words or ideas, and you must tell the reader where you found them. In some cultures, it is not necessary to attribute famous sayings or important ideas – you can expect your reader to know the source. In others, you can use sentences exactly from a source without quotation marks as long as you give the correct citation.

But American academic culture is different: as a writer, you are responsible for separating your work from other people's and for identifying your sources. Remember that Americans value individualism and believe that writers create their own text and so own their words in some sense (Swales & Feak, 2004). Your job, then, is to include other people's ideas in a way that is accurate and appropriate in your discipline.

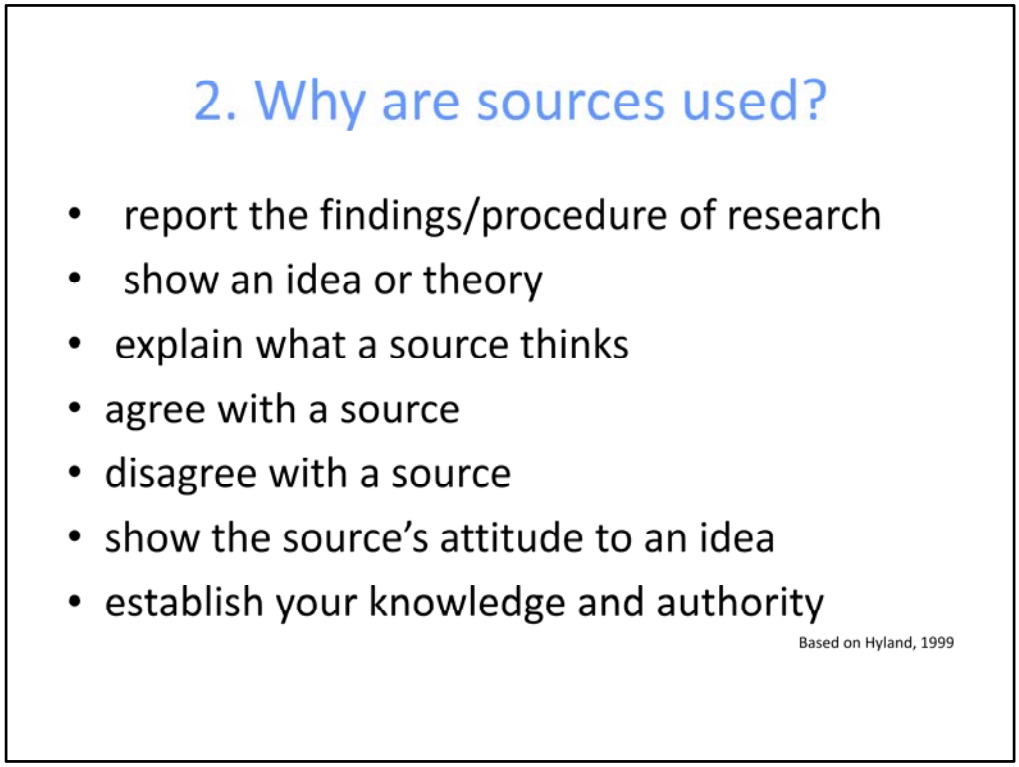


Instead of talking about how to avoid plagiarism or prevent punishment, let's look at this issue from a positive side: how can you use sources well in your writing (Schmitt, 2010)? Since the normal use of sources and the definition of plagiarism vary across fields of study (academic disciplines/subjects) and genres (text types: classwork, dissertations, research papers), here are some important questions to ask. We'll look at each one in turn.



Sources are important in most – but not all – academic writing. Here's a table of the average number of citations in research papers in various disciplines. [pause] As you can see, most academic writers use dozens of references every time they write. Even physicists and engineers have to cite sometimes.

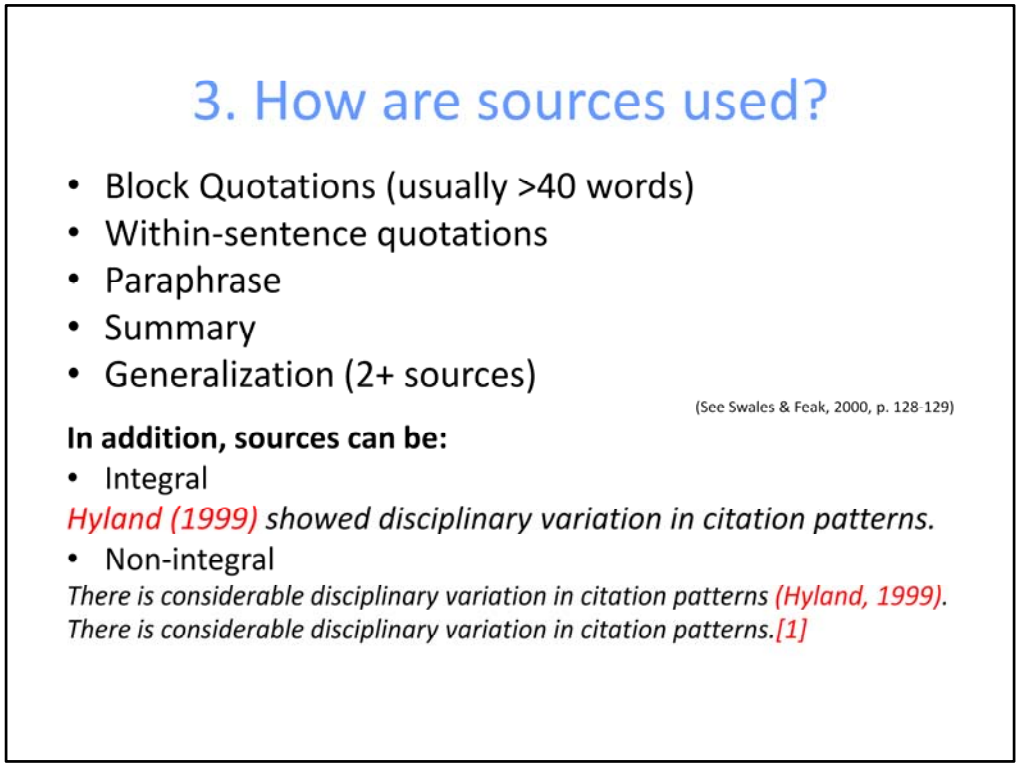
As a writer, you need to find out how what level of source use is expected in your field and in any particular kind of writing. You should also look more closely at where the most citations appear: so, in research papers in your field, how many references to sources do you find in the introduction, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion sections? Do you cite in the abstract, or not? This kind of investigation will help you uncover the conventions of your field and genre.



A related question is to see why sources are used. Here are some common reasons:

1. report the findings/procedure of research ("hard" sciences)
2. show an idea or theory (humanities/ "soft" sciences)
3. explain what a source thinks (believes, suspects)
4. agree with a source (occurs in all disciplines)
5. disagree with a source (rare; only humanities/social sciences)
6. show the source's attitude to an idea – very common (humanities/social sciences likely to show agreement or disagreement; sciences more neutral; marketing more tentative: *suggest*)
7. Establish your own knowledge and authority. This one particular varies according to the type of writing you're doing: in classwork, you probably have to show that you read and understood the assigned texts; in your dissertation, you have to show that you are an expert in the literature of your field; in a research paper, you might be showing where your work fits into the bigger picture of knowledge in your discipline. Generally, you are putting your writing in conversation with your sources, and in a conversation, it's always important to know who is speaking.

You can learn why sources are used by looking at similar writing in your field or by talking to more experienced writers. Understanding why you need sources should help you see why it is important to use them appropriately.

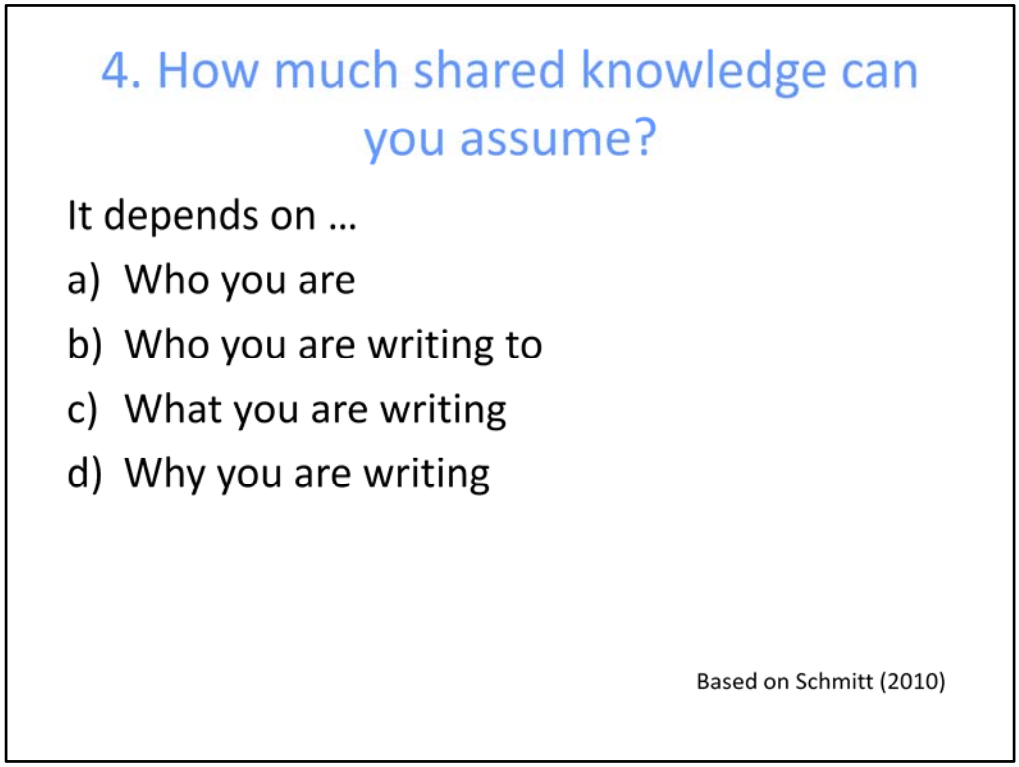


Most writers have several choices in the use of sources, as I mentioned at the start. There are two types of quotation – using words from the source—depending on the length of the quoted text. A block quotation is a long extract – usually 40 + words – from the original. It is usually indented to show that it is not part of your paragraph. Shorter quotations – as short as one word – can be integrated in your sentence, but make sure that you use quotation marks and that it fits your sentence grammatically.

However, most references to sources in academic writing are rewritten as paraphrases, summaries, or generalizations. The difference between them is in the level of detail: you paraphrase a phrase, or sentence, or a few sentences, whereas you summarize an entire text, paper, or chapter. A generalization is a bit different: here you state a general finding, idea, theory, or fact that you found in the literature and you cite 2 or more sources where the reader can find out more.

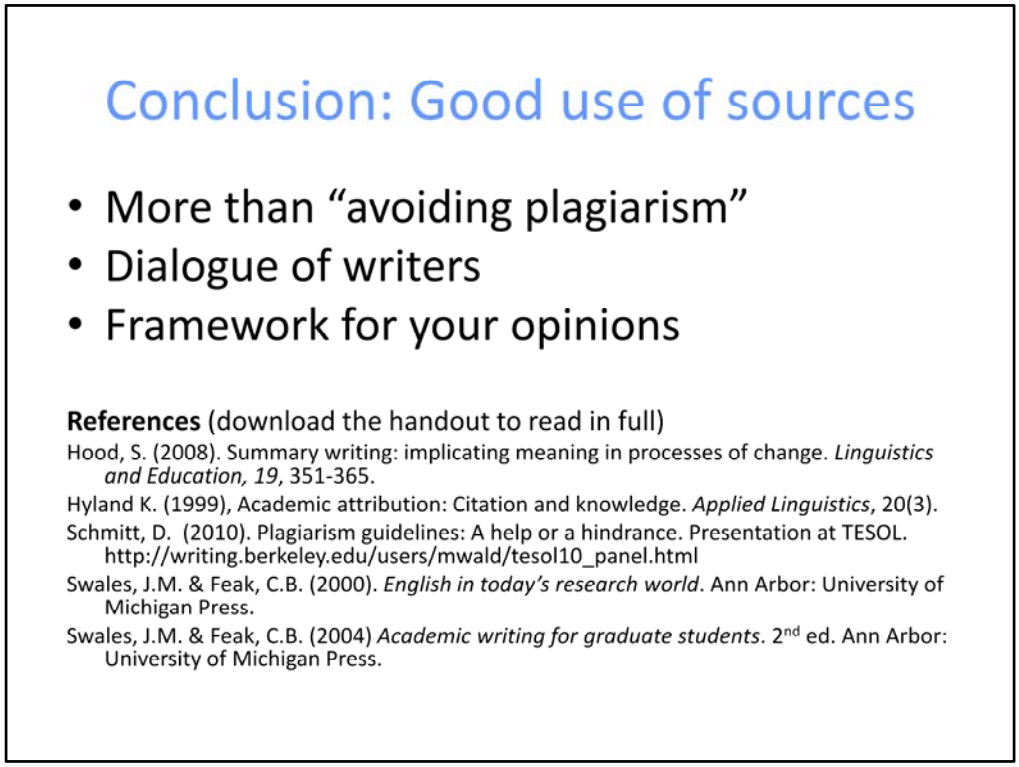
All of these sources can be integral or non-integral. An integral reference includes the authors' names in your sentence. In a non-integral reference, the authors' names appear only in the citation –the parenthesis or numbered note or footnote. The choice between these two may be disciplinary – you may find that writers usually prefer one form or the other in your field. But there is a small difference in meaning, too. In an integral reference, you are giving more prominence to the author, whereas in a non-integral reference, your focus is on the idea, and the writer is secondary.

Here some findings from research into citations. Quotations are less common than paraphrases, summaries, or generalizations, especially in the sciences, where quotations are almost never used. Almost all academic fields use non-integral references (that is, references where the authors' names are in parentheses or footnotes, not in the sentences) more frequently than integral references – about 2/3 to 1/3 in the social sciences, humanities, and business, but scientists only rarely integrate the authors' names in their references. You can see from this that citation practices reflect the values of the discipline: results are more important than people in the sciences, whereas the identity of the writer is more important in the social sciences, where people get identified with certain theories, methods, and ideas. Look at some articles or dissertations in your field for these patterns.



The final question is perhaps the most difficult. Style guides and textbooks will tell you that you don't need a citation for facts and information that your reader already knows – that is, knowledge that everyone in your field shares. So, we don't usually cite after statements such as: Philadelphia was the first capital of the United States, or water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.
However, it is often far less clear what constitutes shared or common knowledge as opposed to the specialist knowledge you learned from your sources. In this case, your decision depends on who you are – a first-year graduate student is not expected to already have much of the knowledge of the field; who you are writing to – a general audience or a specialist one (Schmitt, 2010); what you are writing – so in a class paper, you might be expected to cite information that is well-known to your professor to prove that you read and understood your sources; and finally, why you are writing. Are you displaying your knowledge of the field? Are you trying to persuade the reader that your work fits previous studies or is different from them?

Generally, I would advise you to cite too much rather than too little. It is easy to delete redundant citations. It is more difficult to defend yourself against charges of plagiarism.



To wrap up, then, using sources means more than just avoiding plagiarism. Academic writers use sources to show their knowledge, support their ideas, enter into the conversations in their field, and provide a framework for expressing their own ideas.

If you'd like to follow up on any of my references, please download the PDF of these slides from the Writing Center website.

In part 2 of this 3-part series, we will look at the language choices you have when writing a summary or paraphrase to see how you can make a source best fit your text, your opinions, and your ideas. You can find links to the series on the Writing Center's ESL videos page.

Thank you for watching this presentation. Please take a moment to complete a quick evaluation survey. Link under the video.

I'm Nigel Caplan in the Writing Center at UNC-Chapel Hill. Join me again for part 2 of paraphrasing and plagiarism.