

Exercise 1: Summarizing, Paraphrasing, Quoting, and Citing

The exercise below provides students with a text and asks them to paraphrase, summarize, and cite it. The instructor must then evaluate their work. To give students more control over the assignment, instructors can ask them to work with an Internet text of their own choosing. Students must understand the difference between paraphrasing and summarizing before attempting the assignment.

Pretend that you are writing an essay on how the frontier experience shaped the development of the United States. While researching, you come across the following passage written by the historian Frederick Jackson Turner:

From the conditions of frontier life came intellectual traits of profound importance. The work of travelers along each frontier from colonial days onward describe certain common traits, and these traits have, while softening down, still persisted as survivals in the place of their origin, even when a higher social organization succeeded. The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and acquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom—these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier. (Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 37.)

You decide to include a paraphrase or summary of the entire passage in your essay. Remember that a paraphrase records all the important details of a passage, and a summary condenses a passage to the main ideas.

1. In your own words, write the best **paraphrase** you can of Turner’s passage. Write a citation for your paraphrase.
2. In your own words, write the best **summary** you can of Turner’s passage. Write a citation for your summary.
3. Rewrite your summary or paraphrase to include a **quotation** from Turner’s passage. What is the best way to cite both the summary or paraphrase *and* the quotation?
4. Purposely write a *poor* **paraphrase** and **summary** of the above passage with *poor* quotations and citations, and make a short list of the characteristics that make them poor.