Uses sources effectively: To quote, or not to quote?

Many students first learn to write from research by using quotations from sources to support their own ideas in a paper. This model for early learning follows a sensible process:

- examine a topic
- find out what an expert has to say about it
- quote that person as authoritative support in a piece of writing.

However, college-level writers are expected to work with source support as professionals and scholars do:

- use source support more often, and
- quote little; paraphrase instead.

Paraphrasing–presenting ideas from a source in the writer's own words and syntax–is important!

- It helps to keep the paper in a consistent voice.
- It demonstrates that the writer understands the material.

This means that when using source support, you should **paraphrase much more often than you quote.** *Note: This is a good general rule. But not all disciplines are the same. In some, like literature, folklore, and philosophy, quoting is a regular feature of good writing; the ideas and how the ideas are expressed can be important. Other disciplines, especially the sciences, expect very little to no quotations in scholarly writing.*

So, when should you use quotations in your writing?

When to quote:
Robert A. Harris, in *Using Sources Effectively,* says that quotations can be useful (not necessary!) as

- expert declaration
- direct support
- effective language
- historical flavor
- specific example
- controversial statement

When not to quote:
Always make the decision to quote very carefully; it should never be your "default." (Paraphrasing should be.) But definitely avoid what Harris calls "cautions about quoting":

- quoting too often
- quoting one source too many times
- quoting too long

Lewis Hall-321 • 360-416-7855 • SVC.WritingCenter@skagit.edu • skagit.edu/writing-center • ONLINE at skagit.mywconline.com

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