WRITING SKILLS

Teacher's notes

Avoid plagiarism

Warm up

Ask students what plagiarism is – see what they think. Can they name any famous cases of plagiarism? If they don't know of any, they can research online and find information. Elicit their ideas about how you can avoid plagiarizing in written work. How can you talk about other people's ideas without stealing them?

Practice

1 Match the reporting verbs to the descriptions of the author's stance.

- Go through the first couple of items and work out the answers together as a class. Students can work by finding the definition to match the word or vice versa.

Answers

a states
b denies
c mentions
d assumes
e demonstrates
f argues
g implies
h suggests

2 Read the texts. Decide whether you would use a direct quote (DQ) or paraphrase (P) to cite each one.

- Have students work in pairs or small groups to discuss the texts. Depending on how well you think they will get on, you could assign just one or two texts to each pair/group.
- This is quite a difficult exercise, since the texts vary widely and some of them use antiquated language. Explain that students don't need to understand the whole of each text at this stage; the main thing is to try to understand roughly what kind (*genre*) of text it is, and to get an idea of whether a direct quote or a paraphrase would be more appropriate. Make clear that there are not right or wrong answers here.
- Have a whole-class discussion and elicit ideas about the texts from different pairs/groups. Some possible answers, and reasons for them, are given below.

Possible answers

a DQ – Since this is a poem, the author's original words have a special significance.
b P – The original text is quite long, and the important points are split up, making it quite difficult to give a short direct quote; it is easier to paraphrase it.
c DQ – This quotation uses memorable and poetic language, and relates to a significant event in the history of a country.
d P – This text uses quite old-fashioned language; it is possible to state the central point in a way that is easier to understand.
e P – The main point of the text is at the end, and can be made more emphatically with a paraphrase.

3 **Write a citation for each text in Exercise 2. Remember to use a citing phrase.**

- Refer students to the Key features of citations Factsheet at the end of these Teacher's Notes. It may be best to print copies for them. Explain that they should write a one- or two-sentence citation for each text. They can use their answers from Exercise 2 to decide whether they want to paraphrase or direct-quote each text. Either way, they should select the part of the text – or the important point – that they want to cite.

Possible answers

a In his poem *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (1849), Tennyson states, ''Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all.'

b In his diary of 1666, Pepys records that during the Great Fire of London, he buried some of his possessions – including some papers, wine and cheese – in his garden.

c Toussaint L'Ouverture states that although his arrest 'cut down in Saint-Domingue … the tree of liberty[,] it will spring up again from the roots, for they are numerous and they are deep.'

d According to Hobbes' *Leviathan*, a national ruler has an obligation to protect the people living in his or her country.

e Marie Curie contends that it is wrong to try to justify science through arguments about how useful it is. For example, the medical uses of radium were unknown when she discovered this element, so she would have been unable to justify research which in fact became very valuable.

4 **Discuss. Are the statements common knowledge? Mark each statement C (common knowledge) or N (needs to be cited).**

- Have students work in pairs to discuss each statement and decide whether or not it is common knowledge.
- Elicit reasons from students for their answers; be as generous as possible to competing interpretations. For some of the statements, either answer is possible; a lot depends on context. For example, item f is not common knowledge in the UK or, probably, in much of the world, but might be counted as common knowledge in Ireland itself. Conversely, item k is an opinion which is quite widely held, and which may be true, but which is probably too generalized an issue in the public imagination (at least in the UK) to really count as knowledge. Moreover, in the USA, many people deny the truth of the statement. Go through each item and see what students think; hopefully the discussion will lead naturally towards the question in Exercise 5.

Answers

a	N	**b**	N	**c**	C	**d**	N	**e**	N	**f**	N
g	N	**h**	N	**i**	C	**j**	C	**k**	N	**l**	C

Reflect

5 **Discuss. How can you work out whether something is common knowledge?**

- Use the discussion of the answers in Exercise 4 as a springboard for this more general group or whole-class discussion. See what students think – there are many possible answers. If you have not already done so, see if you can guide students towards the suggestion that knowledge is contextual (see notes for Exercise 4). In other words, what is common knowledge in one context might not be in another. For example, different academic subjects may have different areas of common knowledge. There are also different cultural contexts to consider: since, in theory, the academic community is global, there should be quite a high standard for what counts as common cultural knowledge in academic writing, because the writer often does not belong to the same culture as the reader.

Key features of citations

There are two parts to a typical citation: the citing phrase and the main idea.

Citing phrase

- To cite an idea, you need to use a citing phrase. A citing phrase introduces the idea by saying whose it is or where it comes from. The most common type of citing phrase has a reporting verb. Here are some examples of citing phrases (with reporting verbs highlighted):

  Watson's study demonstrates that …

  In Minima Moralia (1951), Adorno argues that …

  As Berlioz suggests, …

  Schalansky (2009) states that …
- You don't always need a reporting verb. A different type of citing phrase uses according to:

  According to the UNHCR Global Report (2018), …

  According to Whitehead and Russell (1910), …

Main idea

- After the citing phrase, you need to give the idea you are citing. You can do this in two ways: with a paraphrase or with a direct quote.

Paraphrase

- A paraphrase states what someone else has said using your own words. For example:

  In Minima Moralia (1951), Adorno argues that the life of the mind has been radically circumscribed and damaged by modern culture.
- A paraphrase is very useful if you want to summarize something or go into more detail. Paraphrases help you to pace and structure your writing in your own way, rather than having to just follow other people's thoughts.
- See Paraphrase from the C21 Academic Skills series for more details.

Direct quote

- A direct quote uses the exact words the original author used. A direct quote is always inside quote marks (` ' or " "). For example:

  Hamadani (2017) suggests that, overall, `the world is becoming a better place'.
- Direct quotes are very useful for stating the most important points another writer has made, or for giving unusual phrases that would be difficult to paraphrase. Generally speaking, you shouldn't directly quote too many long sections of text. For this reason, academic writers often insert a direct quote into a paraphrase. For example:

  Brock (2017) argues that, although employment figures in the UK are improving, the kinds of jobs people do now are without obvious meaning and leave people with `no sense of purpose'.