

When students (or any writers, for that matter) use material from secondary sources, they must attribute or “give credit” to the writer of the material. Teachers expect students to use this standard academic practice when they write anything (research papers, reviews, or critical essays) that uses another writer’s material as the basis for an essay.

Verbs of Attribution: Certain verbs make “giving credit to” or attributing information to others easy. These verbs are called verbs of attribution. Several verbs of attribution exist, but we will list only a few of the most common ones.

- Affirms
- Argues
- Asserts
- Believes
- Claims
- Concludes
- Contends
- Explains
- Maintains
- Observes
- Remarks
- States
- Suggests
- Writes

Although all of these verbs “give credit to” someone for saying something, the verbs mean slightly different things. For example, it is different to “argue” something than it is to “suggest” it. Pay attention to the subtleties of meaning.

Using Verbs of Attribution in Direct Quotation and Paraphrase: We use verbs of attribution when we quote directly or paraphrase someone else’s material. To **quote directly** means to use the exact words as the original. To **paraphrase** means to say, in your own words, something as close to the original as possible, ideally to say the same thing as the original – but in your own words.

Direct Quotation: Willa Cather **writes that** “on either side of this road straggled two uneven rows of wooden buildings.”

If necessary, tell the reader who the author is by using an appositive, a short definition set off by commas.

Example: Willa Cather, **an American novelist who described frontier life**, **writes that** “on either side of this road straggled two uneven rows of wooden buildings.”

Sometimes, when you quote an author directly, you may use a verb of attribution without the relative pronoun **that**, as in the following sentence. In this case, the first word of the quoted sentence is capitalized.

Example: Willa Cather, an American novelist who described frontier life, writes, “**O**n either side of this road straggled two uneven rows of wooden buildings.”

Paraphrase: Brené Brown, a research professor of social work at the University of Houston, **concludes that** whole-hearted people typically embrace vulnerability.

In the exercises that follow, if an idea is within quotation marks, it is the original author’s exact words and must be placed within quotation marks. Bracket [] indicate the addition of a word, a minor change that is not in the original author’s text. If the idea lacks quotation marks, it is a paraphrase of the original.

Exercises: Use a different verb of attribution and the word that to give credit to the listed author.

1. (Machiavelli) "it is much safer to be feared than loved, when, of the two, either must be dispensed with."

2. (William Sumner, an early proponent of Social Darwinism) "every effort to realize equality necessitates a sacrifice of liberty."

3. (Benjamin Franklin) if people want to convince someone else of their opinion, they should adopt the guise of "the humble inquirer and doubter."

4. (Adam Smith, a classical economist) "The real price of everything ... is the toil and trouble of acquiring it."

5. (Mrs. Goddard Orpen) "A grain of sand, or some such minute foreign substance, gets within the jealous valves of the [oyster] and causes great irritation to the soft body of the pulpy inhabitant."

6. (Frederick Douglass) he does "not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday."

7. (W. E. B. Du Bois) "education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution, of dissatisfaction and discontent."

8. (Susan B. Anthony) when people come together to form a nation, they do not relinquish their rights.
