Voice in written work

What is voice?
Think of your assignment as a (written) conversation about ideas between you and the authors (sources) whose work you refer to. Your voice is what you think about their ideas and the topic you are writing about.

Your voice includes
- your response to the topic
- your response to what you have read
- your response to what the sources say about the topic.

How do I incorporate my voice?
Try this technique when writing the paragraphs in the body of your essay
- Make an opening statement (topic sentence, your voice).
- Present the ideas of a source or sources (use correct in-text citation).
- Offer your response(s) to their ideas (your voice).
- Tie what the source(s) say and what you say together (your voice).

If you fail to differentiate between your voice and the voices of your sources, the reader will think that all the ideas are yours – that’s plagiarism.

How do I present the ideas of others?
There are a number of ways to refer to the ideas of your sources.
- Use the exact words of the source (quotation) plus quotation marks e.g. Hall maintains that “pollution in the town’s river is slowly diminishing” (2007 p. 25).
- Paraphrase or summarise the ideas of the source(s) and include the name of the source(s) as part of the sentence e.g. Hall’s (2007 p.28) belief that there has been a gradual decrease in pollution is questioned by Anderson (2008).
- Paraphrase or summarise the ideas of the source(s) but put the complete citation in brackets e.g. Research shows that the quality of water in the town’s river is gradually improving (Hall 2007, p.25).

What are the differences between paraphrasing, summarising and quoting?
Paraphrasing, summarising and quoting all involve using someone else’s ideas.
- Paraphrasing involves reproducing the same message as the text using different words, phrases and sentence structures.
- Summarising involves making accurate general statements about the ideas or information contained in a source using different words, phrases and sentence structures.
- Quoting involves using the exact words and punctuation as in the source.

Where do I get more information? The Study Smarter plagiarism portal