Integrating Sources

Formally introduce sources the first time you use them in your paper.

- Indicate the type of source, especially when relevant – is it a research work, a novel, an informal interview, a case study, etc?
- Is the work or author famous for some particular reason? If so, briefly inform/remind your readers.
- Use author’s first and last name at this time.
- You may choose to refer to the title of the work, especially if it is relevant to your paper in some way, or if it provides additional credibility.

After the first time, you should assume your readers will remember your previous introduction, and may only refer to the author by his/her last name.

If you do not mention the author’s name in the sentence you’re citing, use the last name in your MLA formatted citation (Henriksen 9). If you do use the author’s name, you may just list the page number (9).

Sources are essential to building a good argument, but they need to be used productively. Remember that sources were not written with your thesis in mind. It’s therefore up to you to use them to strengthen and develop your thesis rather than to detract from it. Use the following guidelines to help you use them effectively:

- Select quotes or ideas that are directly related to your thesis or your paper’s subpoints.
- Quotes or ideas may be used to offer evidence or examples, to present claims to support your arguments, or to give you something to argue against. No matter what their purpose is, you need to discuss and interpret the information you present from outside sources. Don’t assume that your reader will automatically see the connections you’re trying to make.
- Don’t rely too heavily on one or two sources. Synthesize ideas. Also be careful not to let sources determine the organization of your paper.
- Introduce source material instead of just dropping it in. Give readers a brief context for the information you’re using.
- Use brackets and ellipses (see handbook for details) to clarify and streamline quoted material.
- Construct sentences so your quote fits into them (see handbook for details).
- Quote material accurately – double check to make sure you have exactly reproduced the author’s words and spelling.

In general, it’s best to rely more heavily on paraphrasing material than quoting it. Paraphrasing preserves the tone of your voice and continues your argument, while quoting interrupts both. The following indicates when using quotes may be best:

- If the point has already been made so clearly and concisely you can’t express it more clearly and concisely
- A certain phrase or sentence in the source is particularly vivid or striking
- An important passage is so difficult, dense or rich that you will need to analyze it. You may quote the passage so that readers can better follow your analysis
- If the words contribute emotional energy that would be dissipated by paraphrase
- If you want the authority the quote provides
- If you do not feel you can reword the information without changing its meaning
When you do use quotes, follow these guidelines:

- If a quote takes up more than 3 or 4 lines, you should use the long quote format described in your handbook. This means indenting the left margin .5 inches and dropping the quotation marks. These quotes should begin on a new line, and should only be used if necessary (1 or 2 per paper is plenty).
- Quotes should not just be “dropped” into your text. Instead, introduce them briefly, using a signal or attributive phrase, and then provide a brief interpretation of them and discuss the significance they have for your thesis/argument.

More about Signal/attributive phrases

- Sample words for signal/attributive phrases include adds, admits, agrees, analyzes, answers, argues, asks, believes, cites, compares, contrasts, concludes, concurs, considers, defines, demonstrates, describes, discovers, emphasizes, examines, explores, finds, identifies, investigates, lists, notes, observes, postulates, presents, proposes, proves, questions, remarks, replies, reports, shows, states, stresses, suggests.
- Obviously, you are not limited to “writes, says,” etc. Try to select a word that emphasizes the type or significance of the information you are presenting. For example, if you are presenting a theory, you might say, “Anderson claims that …” or “Anderson theorizes…” If you are presenting a fact, you might say, “Anderson discovered …” or “Studies have revealed …” (Anderson 34).