Using Sources

UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

Why do writers use sources in their writing?

Academic writing can take on different forms, but it generally involves interacting with other peoples' words and ideas. Academic writers draw on the work of others to:

- Lend credibility to their arguments.
- Show what research informs their thinking.
- Provide readers with sources that they can use for their own projects.

What are the different ways writers incorporate sources in their writing?

There are three ways: quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing. While you can use these three ways to achieve different goals, you draw on others' work in order to strengthen your argument--to achieve the goals you have for your project. Each time you quote, paraphrase, or summarize, be sure that you let the reader know whose work you are using and why you are using it. For example:

> The Louisville Cardinal's teeth have been a source of heated debate amongst collegiate mascot enthusiasts. Johnson (2014), a fervent supporter of the addition of teeth to the mascot, proclaimed, "without teeth, the Louisville Cardinal would appear annoyed at best; with teeth, the Louisville Cardinal has the menacing, intimidating snarl that effectively intimidates any opponents" (p. 12). Johnson's assertion may be called into question, however, when one considers how "menacing" the Cardinal mascot might appear when compared to other, more innately aggressive animals, such as bears.

In this passage, the writer introduces the source by giving the reader some context to better understand who is being quoted and what the quote is generally about. The quote itself is formatted properly. Finally, the writer rightly follows the quote with some discussion about what the writer sees as important in the quote. Providing this discussion allows the reader to understand both how the writer interprets the quote and how the writer is using the quote to further his or her own argument. Sometimes this approach of introducing a quote by providing context and following the quote with a discussion is called "sandwiching."

Using Sources: Quoting

What are some useful questions and approaches concerning quotation?

When should I use a quotation?

Whenever you feel as though showing the author's *exact wording* is essential in order to accurately reflect their message, you should use a quotation.

How should I use a quotation?

- Be sure to introduce your quote. Writers often use a signal phrase to let the reader know that a quote is coming.

  Johnson (2014) wrote
  According to Johnson (2014)

- You should surround the author's exact words with quotation marks (including an in-text citation after the quotation marks, but before the period). For example:

  "Without teeth, the Louisville Cardinal would appear annoyed at best; with teeth, the Louisville Cardinal has the menacing, intimidating snarl that effective-ly intimidates any opponents" (Johnson, 2014, p. 12).

- You can also break up a long quotation like the one listed above by eliminating non-essential information through the use of ellipses (…). For example:

  "…with teeth, the Louisville Cardinal…intimidates any opponents" (Johnson, 2014, p. 12).

- Follow the quote with a discussion about what you want the reader to understand about the quote. Since you quote to strengthen your argument, be clear about what the quote does for your argument.

How long should my quotes be?

Try to avoid using too many long quotations in your work. If you want to include all the information contained in the quotation, try splitting each section up into separate, smaller quotations, and analyze each piece separately.

Using Sources: Paraphrasing

What are some useful questions and approaches concerning paraphrase?

When should I paraphrase?

When the exact wording the author used is not vital, and/or you can state the information more succinctly.

How should I paraphrase?

• Use a signal phrase to let the reader know a paraphrase is coming.

• It is important to remember that paraphrasing an author's ideas does not mean simply changing a few words or switching the word order of the author's original text.

> Weak paraphrase
> If the Cardinal didn't have teeth, it would seem annoyed; now that the Cardinal has teeth, it has a threatening, scary sneer that frightens any opponent (Johnson, 2014, p. 12).
>
> Good paraphrase
> Johnson (2014) argues that the Cardinal's teeth allow it to appear more frightening despite the fact that the Cardinal is not a normally seen as an aggressive animal (p. 12).

• Follow the paraphrase with a discussion. Let the reader know how you want to use the information or ideas in the paraphrase in your paper.

Where do I put the citation when I paraphrase?

If your paraphrase is more than a sentence long, you can wait to add the in-text citation at the end of the paraphrase. Most importantly, be sure the reader can tell when your paraphrase begins and ends.

Using Sources: Summary/Final Thoughts

What are some useful questions and approaches concerning summary?

How is summary different than paraphrase?

Writers often confuse paraphrase and summary, which is understandable since they are very similar. Paraphrase usually involves a line-by-line restating of a passage while summary is a much shorter restating of a passage. More commonly, though, writers use summary when they wish to give an overview of the entire source. Summary can also be used to set up a quote or paraphrase—the writer may give a general summary of the source before quoting or paraphrasing a specific part of it.

When should I summarize?

Summarize when you wish to explain the overall message the author is trying to convey and merge his or her ideas with your own, or when covering the specific details of a passage or of an entire source is less important to you.

Final thoughts.

Whether you are quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing, you should *always cite your sources.* That way, you can proudly and accurately display all of the research you have done.