

4.6.10: Synthesizing Sources

Learning Objectives

Describe techniques to incorporate sources into your writing.

Using Your Sources

There are three methods for referencing a source in your own text: quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing.

Quoting

Direct quotations are words and phrases that are taken directly from another source and then used word-for-word in your text. If you incorporate a direct quotation from another author's text, you must put that quotation or phrase in quotation marks to indicate that it is not your language.

When writing direct quotations, you can use the source author's name in the same sentence as the quotation to introduce the quoted text and to indicate the source in which you found the text. You should then include the page number or other relevant information in parentheses at the end of the phrase or use footnotes or end notes to cite the source. (The exact format will depend on the formatting style of your essay).

Paraphrasing

When paraphrasing, you may put any part of a source (such as a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or chapter) into your own words.

You may find that the original source uses language that is more clear, concise, or specific than your own language, in which case you should use a direct quotation, putting quotation marks around those unique words or phrases you don't change. It is common to use a mixture of paraphrased text and quoted words or phrases, as long as the direct quotations are inside of quotation marks. You must still cite the source even if you rephrase their idea in your own words.

Summarizing

Summarizing involves distilling the main idea of a source into a much shorter overview. A summary outlines a source's most important points and general position. When summarizing a source, it is still necessary to use a citation to give credit to the original author. You must reference the author or source in the appropriate citation at the end of the summary.

Integrating Material from Sources

Incorporating sources into your writing uses a general pattern.

- You make a claim or point, e.g., "The Human Fund helps >25% of the downtown Chicago homeless population."
- You cite evidence, e.g. an MLA citation or [APA citation](#), by embedding a hyperlink in a digital document, by paraphrasing, or by using a direct quote.
- You segue to another claim or new point.

The relationship between claim and evidence is key; for your writing to be effective, you must back up claims or knowledge with quality evidence (sources).

Integrating materials from sources into your own text can be tricky; if we consider the metaphor that writing a paper and including sources is a way of facilitating a conversation about a topic, it helps us to think about how this will work best. When you're discussing a topic in person with one or more people, you will find yourself referring to outside sources: "When I was watching the news, I heard them say that . . . I read in the newspaper that . . . John told me that . . ." These kinds of phrases show instances of using a source in conversation and ways that we automatically shape our sentences to work references to the sources into the flow of conversation.

Think about this next time you try to work a source into a piece of writing: if you were speaking this aloud in conversation, how would you introduce the material to your listeners? What information would you give them in order to help them understand who the author was, and why their view is worth referencing? After giving the information, how would you then link it back to the point you were trying to make? Just as you would do this in a conversation if you found it necessary to reference a newspaper article or television show you saw, you also need to do this in your essays.

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- Integrating Sources from Chapter 5: Critical Thinking, Source Evaluations, and Analyzing Academic Writing. **Authored by:** Denise Snee, Kristin Houlton, Nancy Heckel. Edited by Kimberly Jacobs. **Located at:** lgdata.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/docs/679/734444/Snee_2012_Research_Analysis_and_Writing.pdf. **Project:** Research, Analysis, and Writing. **License:** *CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike*

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