

Effective Verbs for Referring to Source Material

When you are writing an academic argument, you need to anchor your quotations and paraphrases into your paper. Anchoring your source material effectively allows you to establish authority and to help your readers understand which author or authors you are referring to.

One of the best ways to anchor a source in a document is to include an introduction. Consider the three examples below, all of which were taken from student papers.

- Conwell says, "Love of money is the root of all evil."
- John Locke states, "Government has no other end than the preservation of property."
- Karl Marx says that religion functions to dull people's resentment towards oppression.

"Says" and "states" are bland words, however, especially when used over and over in a paper. The following verbs offer some variety in introducing source materials. Be warned, though: Read the explanations carefully, because some of these words have specific connotations that might not exactly fit the tone you are trying to achieve.

- **Admit:** Suggests that the author only reluctantly offers the information you're discussing
- **Agree:** Indicates that the author is echoing a viewpoint already established in your paper
- **Argue:** Indicates that the author is taking a stand on an issue
- **Assume:** Looks at an author's underlying reasons for making a particular claim; if applicable, you might follow a quote introduced by "assume" with an explanation of why this assumption is accurate or inaccurate
- **Believe:** Introduces source material that seems more opinionate than argument-based
- **Blame:** Indicates that the author is assigning responsibility for a negative outcome
- **Censure:** Introduces source material that include a reprimand of some sort
- **Characterize:** Suggests that the author includes a description that has an agenda (in other words, the author describes something in a particular way to make the reader come to a particular conclusion)
- **Claim:** Like "argue," indicates that the author is taking a stand on an issue
- **Classify:** Introduces a passage that breaks a topic down into categories
- **Commend:** Indicates that the author is praising someone or is assigning responsibility for a positive outcome
- **Conclude:** Suggests that the author reaches a decision after studying the topic carefully
- **Condemn:** Introduces a passage that attacks or denounces someone
- **Consider:** Suggests that the author entertained other perspectives or counterarguments
- **Criticize:** Indicates that the author is pointing out flaws or weaknesses in another person's arguments or actions
- **Decide:** Suggests that the author reaches a conclusion after studying the topic carefully
- **Define:** Indicates that the author is assigning a specific meaning to a given term or idea
- **Deny:** Indicates that the author is refuting another author's arguments, data, etc.
- **Depict:** Like "characterize," suggests that the author includes a description that has an agenda (in other words, the author describes something in a particular way to make the reader come to a particular conclusion)

- **Describe:** Indicates that the author is offering a verbal picture of a setting or a situation
- **Determine:** Like "conclude" and "decide" suggests that the author has reached a conclusion after careful study
- **Discover:** Indicates that the author has found out something new
- **Doubt:** Suggests that the author is uncertain about a particular idea or argument
- **Evaluate:** Suggests that the author has made a judgment of worth regarding a topic
- **Explain:** Implies that the author carefully breaks down the topic
- **Hypothesize:** Indicates that the author has proposed an original argument
- **Imply:** Indicates that an author is only suggesting a particular point, rather than coming right out and saying it
- **Indicate:** Like "say" or "state," shows that the author is putting forth information (NEUTRAL)
- **Infer:** Indicates that the author has reached a conclusion by drawing out logical information about a topic
- **Maintain:** Like "claim," suggests that the author is taking a stand on an issue
- **Present:** Indicates that the author is putting forth information
- **Presume:** Like "assume," looks at an author's underlying reasons for making a particular claim; if applicable, you might follow a quote introduced by "presume" with an explanation of why this presumption is accurate or inaccurate
- **Prove:** Indicates that an author definitively supported his/her argument
- **Reveal:** Suggests that the author is unveiling new information
- **Show:** Like "explain," implies that the author carefully breaks down the topic
- **State:** Indicates that the author is putting forth information (NEUTRAL)
- **View:** Like "believe," introduces source material that seems more opinionate than argument-based