

# How to incorporate source material into your own writing

## There are 4 parts to successful incorporation of source material

### Intro

*Attribute* the source for your evidence to provide both the context and the credibility of the source.

### Quote

*Reproduce* the most relevant language exactly and briefly, punctuating correctly.

### Relate

*Interpret* the passage, describing what it means in your own words, unless the meaning is self-evident.

### Restate

*Analyze* the quote, demonstrating how the evidence supports the claims you make in the paragraph and the overall paper.

How you cite sources is more than a strictly formal matter of punctuation and formatting a list of works cited; it is one of the hallmarks of academic writing, indicating how writers know what they know. There are three primary ways to use a source: summary, paraphrase, and direct quote. For all three, you need to introduce each source with as much information as necessary to demonstrate the topic, context, and credibility of the source; after the summary, paraphrase, or quote, you need to cite the page number parenthetically. Even summaries and paraphrases should partial quote a key term or two to link your words to those of the source. In general, early in your academic career, it may be better to quote than to paraphrase or summarize, particularly in your humanities courses—as opposed to the sciences. Your English instructors often are interested in the language and sources you choose and how you use them, and we often want to see what specific interpretation you have. Most important, link your use of evidence to the overall claims you make in that paragraph and your paper as a whole. Your own words should far outnumber those of your sources. Incorporating quotes is part of critical thinking at every stage in the process, from finding relevant sources, to selecting brief but apt passages, to identifying sources to demonstrate their relevance, to unpacking what the quote means and how it contributes to your paper.

### DOs

- Do choose brief passages that illustrate your claims and provide evidence for your argument.
- Do include information about the source to emphasize its credibility—this may be the writer or speaker’s name, article or book title, name of an organization, or something else.
- Do familiarize yourself with the mechanics of using quotes. Offset brief attributing tags (i.e., *He writes*, *She says*,) with commas, and longer statements with colons. Use quotation marks only around the quote, not the parentheses, and save an ending period or comma for after the parentheses.
- Do keep your parenthetical citations as brief as possible.
- Do use the convention of referring to texts in the present tense.

### DON'Ts

- Do not copy the language or ideas of others without quoting—that is plagiarism.
- Do not simply add a parenthetical notation at the end of a long passage featuring few quotes or little attribution—that is meaningless citation that does not distinguish between your thoughts and those of others.
- Do not include long quote after long quote—your instructor is interested in your ability to conduct an argument, not merely cut and paste the writing of others.

### ***Unsuccessful***

*An example of unsuccessful incorporation of quotes is a paragraph that includes eight brief excerpts from the text cited like this:*

He participates in programs. “used to join them before he started working late” (pg.24) Later, he does other things.

### ***Successful***

*This successful quote features an attributing tag identifying the speaker, then features a distinctive quote that opens up another conflict within a character from the same novel as is quoted above:*

Sam is a seventeen-year-old high school student struggling to come to terms with the events of the past, events that happened before she was born. She is also looking to the future and hoping to choose the best path, saying, “I don’t want to go to the same school as my mother. That would be too weird for words” (28). Sam’s desire to distance herself from her mother suggests that she is trying to define herself on her own, and the difficulty of that self-definition occupies much of the novel. This difficulty could appear, at first, to be a sign of her inability to sort things out. However, a central thread of the narrative is that the process of growing up is, perhaps by definition, difficult.