Research 2 — Integrating Sources

You’ve done your research, defined your thesis, and you’re ready to write. Now how do you integrate your research into your paper? That’s a good question, but first let’s talk about why. Research sources provide:

- evidence of a writer’s research (you know and attribute the context around your topic)
- the authority of the expert (your opinion isn’t yours alone)
- specificity of ideas and terms (you couldn’t have said it better yourself)

All that said, you are the writer of your research paper, and your voice takes the lead, with sources providing background framing and foreground highlights. Some research paper writers rely too heavily on their sources, stringing others’ arguments and quotes together. If this is your tendency, try building your outline, topic sentences, and draft paragraphs first, then integrate your source material.

Summarizing, Paraphrasing, and Quoting

There are three ways of incorporating other writers’ words into your own writing. All of them require attribution and citation. **Summarizing** is describing a writer’s main point in your own words. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and provide an effective overview. **Paraphrasing** is putting a passage from source material into your own words (not just removing or changing a few words here and there, but restating in new terms). Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, focused on details that are most relevant to your argument. **Quotations** match the original word for word and are placed in quotes; they are usually quite short — from a few words to a few sentences.

How do we choose whether to summarize, paraphrase, or quote? Summary is useful when you want to present a whole idea quickly, generally as background information. Paraphrase is useful when you want to express a specific idea succinctly. Quotations are useful when the original language is highly specific or expressive.

How Do We Quote (General Principles)

**Carefully.** Beware cutting and pasting from the Internet — it’s never been easier to plagiarize by mistake. Find a clear way to mark your copy-and-pastes (and your transcribed texts) so you don’t mistake them for your own. When transcribing from books, do so accurately. Note the book’s publication information and the quote’s page number the first time, so you don’t have to return to the source and dig out that quote again.

**In context.** All quotes should be preceded by an introductory sentence or signal phrase that identifies the “speaker” and/or the source and alerts the reader to what they’re looking for in the quote. Follow the quote with an interpretation that reflects on the idea in the quote, tailoring it to your specific point. “In other words,” can be useful here, simply to bring home the point; words like “Indeed,” or “Unfortunately” can signal your forthcoming agreement or disagreement with the quote. These conventions serve important functions: distinguishing your own ideas from that of the source and creating a “seamless” reading experience.

**Concisely.** When deciding the scope of your quotes, use only the most salient part. You can provide background information or context in paraphrase (note that quoting and paraphrase are often mixed). Every part of the quote should have an evident reason to be there so your reader will not have to wade through extraneous information.
Example: In his epic biography *A Life of Picasso*, John Richardson describes how Picasso, “still suffering from *chagrin d’amour*” after his prior mistress left him, took up with the Russian dancer Olga Khokhlova, thus continuing a long series of passionate affairs with women whose faces often made their way into his art. Khokhlova, however, was different from the other lovers in at least one way. According to Richardson, “Olga proved adamantly chaste . . . a challenge that Picasso had seldom had to face.” Surprisingly perhaps, Picasso was lured in by Olga’s resistance, and the two soon married.

**How Do We Quote (Finer Points)**

*Use double quotes* (single quotes are British style) except around quotes within quotes. (“Warhol saw the future when he said, ‘Everyone will be famous for 15 minutes.’”)

Things you can change in quotes: first letter (to upper- or lowercase); period vs. comma at the end; single quotes for double quotes internally. You may italicize a word or phrase in a quote to alert the reader to your focus. After the quote, write “(Emphasis mine.)”

*Insert ellipses* (…) where you’ve skipped words.

You may add or change words (minimally) in a quote for clarity or tense, placed in brackets [like this].

For quotes five lines or longer *use a block quote*: no quote marks, indented left and right, set off by a line above and below, preceded by a colon, and followed by a note mark, like this:

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*Punctuation goes inside quotes;* note marks go outside quotes. (…end of sentence.””)

**When Do We Cite Sources?**
Whenever we present the exact words of another — from one word to a whole paragraph — or when paraphrasing or summarizing another’s idea. There’s no need to cite your own words and ideas nor “common knowledge” (generally accepted facts). Sometimes it’s hard to separate which ideas are our own and which come from a source. When in doubt, cite. Citation is essential to avoid plagiarism, or presenting another’s ideas as your own. Doing your own writing is doing your own thinking, and is thus not only a matter of academic integrity but of developing your intellectual and communicative powers. If you want to learn more about avoiding plagiarism, we recommend St. Martin’s Tutorial on Avoiding Plagiarism: http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/plagiarismtutorial

**How Do We Cite Sources?**
Follow your professor’s preference or a guide of your choice (CMS, MLA, etc.) to cite properly for each kind of source (books, essays in anthologies, magazines, newspapers, Web sites, archives, letters, interviews — there’s a style for each). Note that the formats change from footnote to bibliography.