Citing Sources within Written Work

Sources serve an important function in papers. A main reason for using sources is to provide background information. Sources strengthen the writing in the eye of the reader, it shows that the writer has conducted thorough research, and was able to integrate the resources. Research also exposes the areas of controversy around a topic. It is important that the writer points out opposing views, as it shows the reader that the writer is aware of the opposition, and that the writer is able to respond accordingly.

Information literacy is the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information appropriately. Not giving credit to borrowed intellectual material is plagiarism.

Collecting sources

- Always keep a copy, whether it is electronic, printed, or a photo copy.
- As you collect sources, start a running/working bibliography. Enter the full bibliographic information from the start, that way you will not have to search for it later.
- Keep your sources organized. Place printed and photo copied sources in a binder, and create a special folder on your computer or thumb drive for all electronic sources.

Types of sources

- Primary sources – examples are historical documents, laboratory experiments, eyewitness accounts, and other original works.
- Secondary sources – examples are literary criticisms, interpretive works by modern scholars, journal and magazine articles, history textbooks, and other works that are not original to the source.
- Tertiary sources – examples are almanacs, bibliographies, directories, fact books, guidebooks, and abstracts.

How to use sources

- Quoting – using the exact words verbatim. Be careful about quoting too often, quoting a single source too many times, and quoting too long.
- Paraphrasing – restating or rewriting the source in order to present the source’s idea without actually quoting the source. The words should be about the same in a paraphrase as the original.
- Summarizing – a condensed restatement or rewriting of a source in order to present the source’s idea in an more focused or shorter way than quoting or paraphrasing.
How to Integrate Quotations

Quotations can add legitimacy and further insight to a paper, but should never be used without a clear goal in mind. Before copying a quote into a paper, ask yourself whether or not the selected passage is necessary. Above all else, each excerpt from another work must be credited to its original author. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, a nearly unforgivable scholarly sin.

It is important to vary how you introduce your sources. There are a variety of ways to introduce a new source. Remember to quote exactly as it is written, and ensure that the quotation complements a complete sentence.

Introducing sources

Author's name:
- According to Doe,
- John Doe writes that
- In an article by John Doe,

Description of the author (credentials, job titles):
- A Yale University psychologist reports
- A State of Mississippi geologist says

Title of the book or article:
- In *A history of Secret Codes*, we learn
- The article, “The Botanical Source of Western Medicine,” traces

Brief summary of the content:
- In a discussion of the relationship between chocolate consumption and depression,
- A rhetorical analysis of the poem has shown

Expression of the role of the quotation:
- Arguing exactly the opposite,
- As evidence of this,

Citing your sources

The particular method of citation will vary with the paper's style (APA, MLA, Turabian, Chicago, etc.) Some professors are flexible when it comes to style, but this is uncommon. Be absolutely certain to match your paper's style to the course requirements!

Information retrieved from: