

Writing with Sources

In your essays you may be required to find **textual evidence** to help you prove your thesis. This means you will have to incorporate **quotes**, **paraphrases**, and **summaries** of your sources into your writing.

Using textual evidence helps you prove your points. It puts you in conversation with other scholars on your topic, and it also puts the expertise of other scholars to work for you.

You may use three kinds of textual evidence in your essays: summaries, paraphrases, and direct quotes.

Quotations must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author.

Paraphrasing involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually a little shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly.

Summarizing involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.

HOW TO SUMMARIZE

Use summaries to describe work your readers haven't read so that they will understand your argument. Summaries condense an extended idea or argument into a sentence or more in your own words. Use summaries to report the gist of an author's idea.

Exercise 1. Practice summarizing in one sentence the following quotation from an official government report on the “digital divide”:

Original quotation:

The following examples highlight the breadth of the digital divide today:

- Those with a college degree are more than eight times as likely to have a computer at home, and nearly sixteen times as likely to have home Internet access, as those with an elementary school education.
- A high-income household in an urban area is more than twenty times as likely as a rural, low-income household to have Internet access.
- A child in a low-income white family is three times as likely to have Internet access as a child in a comparable black family, and four times as likely to have access as children in a comparable Hispanic household.

—US Department of Commerce, *Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide*, p. 7

Exercise 1. Does your summary match the one below? In a summary, you restate only the main ideas of the original passage, compressing several sentences into only a few.

Original quotation:

The following examples highlight the breadth of the digital divide today:

- Those with a college degree are more than eight times as likely to have a computer at home, and nearly sixteen times as likely to have home Internet access, as those with an elementary school education.
- A high-income household in an urban area is more than twenty times as likely as a rural, low-income household to have Internet access.
- A child in a low-income white family is three times as likely to have Internet access as a child in a comparable black family, and four times as likely to have access as children in a comparable Hispanic household.

Summary:

According to the Department of Commerce, college educated, high-income people from white families are much more likely to have a computer and internet access than less educated minorities from lower income households (7).

HOW TO QUOTE

Use direct quotes from your primary text to illustrate and support your analysis. Use direct quotes from your secondary sources only when the words of your own paraphrase would not be as effective or meaningful.

For your first essay, you must cite all of your sources using a form of documentation called MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation style. (We will cover APA style in a future class.) This means that you will have to cite your quotes and paraphrases within your essay a specific way. If you are writing a research paper for English 1102 you will also have to write a “Works Cited” page on a separate page after your essay, in which you write bibliographic entries for your sources in a specific way (more on this later in the term as well....).

Here's how to properly document your quotes:

Use **parenthetical citations** to document your quotes and paraphrases. At the end of each quote or paraphrase, write the source author's last name and the page number the cited passage is from, as follows.

- Incorporate quotes grammatically within the body of your paragraphs (Davis 123).
- If a quote is over four lines long, then you must left-indent the entire quote within your paragraph. Each line of the quote “must be left-indented ten spaces” (456).
- The first time that you cite from a source, you must cite the author's name either in the body of your paragraph or in the parenthetical citation (Smith 1).
- If you have already mentioned the author's name in your paragraph or in a previous parenthetical citation, then you need write only the page number in parentheses, not the author's already mentioned name (100).

HOW TO QUOTE

For example, here is a quote from an essay by Ted Chiang used in a sentence:

Like many modern authors, Ted Chiang has a very stern view of human affairs, claiming that “modern life is seriously distorted” (225).

And here is the same quote in a sentence that does not mention the name of Chiang:

Many modern authors have a very stern view of human affairs, claiming that “modern life is seriously distorted” (Chiang 225).

HOW TO QUOTE

When using direct quotes from your sources you must incorporate them into the grammatical flow of your own writing. You do this by using **signal phrases** that often include **helping verbs**:

One common **error** a lot of people make when they include a quote is that they tend to put the quote in a sentence by itself. This is called “dumping your quote.”

Unfortunately, we cannot do this because we are then giving the quote without a specific analytical context.

We need to use a **signal phrase** to introduce the quote and give our readers a context for the quote that explains why we are taking the time to include it in our essay.

HOW TO QUOTE

Take, for example, this section from a paper on Frederick Douglass's slave narrative, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*:

We can see Douglass' marriage as an assertion of his ownership of himself. "What Douglass's certificate of marriage, which is transcribed in full in chapter 11, signifies is that the black man has repossessed himself" (Baker 170).

In the above example, the quote from an essay by the critic Houston A. Baker, Jr. thrusts itself into the flow of the paper, disturbing readers because there is no warning that the quote is coming.

HOW TO QUOTE

Yet, with a **signal phrase**, we can make the use of the quote seem more natural to readers:

We can see Douglass' marriage as an assertion of his ownership of himself, as the critic Houston A. Baker, Jr. argues in his essay "The Economic of Douglass's Narrative": "What Douglass's certificate of marriage, which is transcribed in full in chapter 11, signifies is that the black man has repossessed himself" (170).

By including a reference to Baker and his essay in the sentence before giving the quote, we let the reader know that we are using someone's opinion to support our own, giving the quote a context that the reader finds relevant to our overall point.

HOW TO QUOTE

When you are quoting from a work of fiction such as Chiang's story, you still need to use a **signal phrase**, often to put the quote in its context. Below we have an improperly dumped quote that confuses the reader, leaving her unsure about both its connection to the first sentence and its place in the story:

Louise initially worries that she will not be able to communicate at all. "One of the heptapods pointed to itself with one limb, the four terminal digits pressed together. That was lucky. In some cultures a person pointed with his chin; if the heptapod hadn't used one of its limbs, I wouldn't have known what gesture to look for" (Chiang 98).

Without a signal phrase, the reader does not know where this quote fits into Chiang's short story, what is being communicated with, and how the quote relates to the first sentence.

HOW TO QUOTE

By including a transition (“however”), the name “heptapod,” and a little plot summary, we link the quote to the first sentence:

Louise initially worries that she will not be able to communicate at all. However, when she first meets the heptapods, she explains that she immediately noticed a familiar mode of communication: “One of the heptapods pointed to itself with one limb, the four terminal digits pressed together. That was lucky. In some cultures a person pointed with his chin; if the heptapod hadn’t used one of its limbs, I wouldn’t have known what gesture to look for” (Chiang 98).

There are three main ways to set up a signaling phrase:

1. With a complete sentence followed by a colon.

The effects of Auld's prohibition against teaching Douglass to read were quite profound for Douglass: "It was a new and special revelation" (29).

2. With a partial sentence ending in a helping verb, followed by a comma.

Douglass explains that Auld's prohibition against literacy for him was a profound experience, noting, "It was a new and special revelation" (29).

3. With a statement that ends in "that."

The importance of Auld's prohibition to Douglass is clear when Douglass states that "it was a new and special revelation" (29).

HOW TO QUOTE

You can build your own signal phrases by mixing these three basic styles with helping verbs that describe your source's attitude towards the subject of the quote.

Here is a list of such verbs, as well as other phrases you can use:
admits; agrees; argues; asserts; believes; claims; compares;
confirms; contends; declares; denies; emphasizes; insists; notes;
observes; points out; reasons; refutes; rejects; reports;
responds; replies; suggests; thinks; writes; In _____'s words;
According to _____'s (notes, study, narrative, novel, etc.)

Exercise 2. Using a signal phrase, revise the following quote on one your own so that it fits better with the flow of the writer's sentence:

Charlotte Brontë believed that novels should be objective and impartial. Jerry Lyman, a literary critic, agrees with this view and “a good writer does not fail to separate opinions from facts” (53).

Here is a list of helping verbs, as well as other phrases you can use: admits; agrees; argues; asserts; believes; claims; compares; confirms; contends; declares; denies; emphasizes; insists; notes; observes; points out; reasons; refutes; rejects; reports; responds; replies; suggests; thinks; writes; In _____'s words; According to _____'s (notes, study, narrative, novel, etc.)

Exercise 2. The signal phrase “observing that” works well to introduce the quote by Lyman; similarly, the use of a colon turns “agrees with this view” into a signal phrase.

Charlotte Brontë believed that novels should be objective and impartial. Jerry Lyman, a literary critic, agrees with this view and “a good writer does not fail to separate opinions from facts” (53).

Charlotte Brontë believed that novels should be objective and impartial. Jerry Lyman, a literary critic, agrees with this view, observing that “a good writer does not fail to separate opinions from facts” (53).

Charlotte Brontë believed that novels should be objective and impartial. Jerry Lyman, a literary critic, agrees with this view: “a good writer does not fail to separate opinions from facts” (53).

Exercise 3. Using a signal phrase, revise the following quote (spoken by Jane) on a separate sheet of paper so that it fits better with the flow of the writer's sentences:

In Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Jane Eyre*, Jane disagrees with Mr. Rochester's idea that a husband has the right to control his wife, and she asserts her freedom to be an independent married woman. "I am a free human being with an independent will" (252).

Here is a list of helping verbs, as well as other phrases you can use: admits; agrees; argues; asserts; believes; claims; compares; confirms; contends; declares; denies; emphasizes; insists; notes; observes; points out; reasons; refutes; rejects; reports; responds; replies; suggests; thinks; writes; In _____'s words; According to _____'s (notes, study, narrative, novel, etc.)

Exercise 3. There are many ways that you can set up that quote from Jane with a signal phrase. Here is one:

In Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Jane Eyre*, Jane disagrees with Mr. Rochester's idea that a husband has the right to control his wife, and she asserts her freedom to be an independent married woman. "I am a free human being with an independent will" (252).

In Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Jane Eyre*, Jane disagrees with Mr. Rochester's idea that a husband has the right to control his wife, and she asserts her freedom to be an independent married woman by telling Mr. Rochester that "I am a free human being with an independent will" (252).

Exercise 3. And here are two more. Note how the signal phrase also helps the reader *interpret* the quote. A declaration is different from screaming, after all. Be sure to use the correct phrasing to help your reader better understand your quotes:

In Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Jane Eyre*, Jane disagrees with Mr. Rochester's idea that a husband has the right to control his wife, and she asserts her freedom to be an independent married woman. Jane declares, "I am a free human being with an independent will" (252).

In Charlotte Brontë's novel, *Jane Eyre*, Jane disagrees with Mr. Rochester's idea that a husband has the right to control his wife, and she asserts her freedom to be an independent married woman, screaming "I am a free human being with an independent will" (252).

Exercise 4. Often, you must tell your reader how to interpret your quote. Revise the following sentences so that the quoted material isn't just 'dumped' after the first sentence. You will have to add signal phrases and transitional words to do so.

Many fiction writers maintain that it is impossible to keep personal opinions from influencing their selection and presentation of facts. "True, authors, like everyone else, form impressions of what they see and hear. However, a good author does not fail to separate opinions from facts" (Lyman 52).

Here is a list of helping verbs, as well as other phrases you can use: admits; agrees; argues; asserts; believes; claims; compares; confirms; contends; declares; denies; emphasizes; insists; notes; observes; points out; reasons; refutes; rejects; reports; responds; replies; suggests; thinks; writes; In _____'s words; According to _____'s (notes, study, narrative, novel, etc.)

Exercise 4. In order to help the reader understand Lyman's quote, we have to add several signal phrases to this quote. We also broke the quote up with our signal phrases to better help the reader understand Lyman's position here.

Many fiction writers maintain that it is impossible to keep personal opinions from influencing their selection and presentation of facts. "True, authors, like everyone else, form impressions of what they see and hear. However, a good author does not fail to separate opinions from facts" (Lyman 52).

Many fiction writers maintain that it is impossible to keep personal opinions from influencing their selection and presentation of facts. Jerry Lyman partly agrees with this view. He grants that "authors, like everyone else, form impressions of what they see and hear," yet he still insists that "a good author does not fail to separate opinions from facts" (52).

In the first essay you will compose, you will have to incorporate quotes from Ted Chiang's stories into your body paragraphs using signal words and phrases, and MLA parenthetical citations, like this:

Louise is shocked when she first meets a heptapod, telling her daughter that "I jumped when one of them entered" (Chiang 97). Despite the heptapod's strange appearance, which includes "a puckered orifice at the top of its body" that serves as a mouth (98), Louise soon establishes a rapport with the alien race. She even gives them amusing, pet-like names, "Flapper and Raspberry" (103).

Exercise 5. Using a signal phrase, revise the following dumped quote from the novel so that its connection to the preceding sentence is clear:

Louise realizes that the way that the heptapods write is like few forms on writing on Earth. “The heptapods were using a nonlinear system of orthography that qualified as true writing” (Chiang 107).

Here is a list of helping verbs, as well as other phrases you can use: admits; agrees; argues; asserts; believes; claims; compares; confirms; contends; declares; denies; emphasizes; insists; notes; observes; points out; reasons; refutes; rejects; reports; responds; replies; suggests; thinks; writes; In _____'s words; According to _____'s (notes, study, narrative, novel, etc.)

Exercise 5. Here are some effective signal phrases and helping verbs:

Louise realizes that the way that the heptapods write is like few forms on writing on Earth. As she explains, “[t]he heptapods were using a nonlinear system of orthography that qualified as true writing” (Chiang 107).

Louise realizes that the way that the heptapods write is like few forms on writing on Earth because “[t]he heptapods were using a nonlinear system of orthography that qualified as true writing” (Chiang 107).

Exercise 6. Using signal phrases and perhaps a little plot summary, revise the following dumped quotes from the story so that they become part the writer's own sentences:

In Ted Chiang's story, "Story of Your Life," Louise learns some things about the heptapods but not others. "We never did learn why the heptapods left, any more than we learned what brought them here, or why they acted the way they did" (134). The most important thing she did learn is a new way to thinking that causes her to remember her future. "Eventually, many years from now, I'll be without your father, and without you. All I will have left from this moment is the heptapod language" (135). Knowing her future teaches Louise to cherish each moment of her life.

Here is a list of helping verbs, as well as other phrases you can use: admits; agrees; argues; asserts; believes; claims; compares; confirms; contends; declares; denies; emphasizes; insists; notes; observes; points out; reasons; refutes; rejects; reports; responds; replies; suggests; thinks; writes; In _____'s words; According to _____'s (notes, study, narrative, novel, etc.)

Exercise 6. To help our reader understand these quotes, we have had to add not only signal phrases and helping verbs but also brief summaries that explain both when the quotes appear in the story and also what Louise was going through as she herself wrote these quotes:

In Ted Chiang's story, "Story of Your Life," Louise learns some things about the heptapods but not others. As she reflects at story's end, "[w]e never did learn why the heptapods left, any more than we learned what brought them here, or why they acted the way they did" (134). The most important thing she did learn is a new way of thinking that causes her to remember her future. She foresees both her divorce and the death of her daughter. "Eventually," she tells her daughter, "many years from now, I'll be without your father, and without you. All I will have left from this moment is the heptapod language" (135). Knowing her future teaches Louise to cherish each moment of her life.