M | LSA GAYLE MORRIS SWEETLAND CENTER FOR WRITING
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

1310 North Quad • 105 S State St • Ann Arbor MI 48109-1285
p. 734.764.0429 • f. 734.763.9148 • sweetlandinfo@umich.edu
lsa.umich.edu/sweetland • twitter/facebook: UmichSweetland

How do I incorporate quotes into my writing? And why does citation matter?

Overview

If you clicked on this resource, you've got an essay to write, and somewhere in the prompt is a sentence that reads something like this: "Be sure to include outside sources, cite them, and attach a list of works cited." So we're here to help you understand a) how to integrate your sources effectively, and b) what all the fuss is about in the first place. The answer is this: Though you may see integration of quotations and solid citation practices as separate, they actually rely on each other, both for you as the writer and for your readers. In academic and popular writing, people are always responding to other people's ideas about shared interests, so it's useful to think of writing as joining a conversation. In short, then, citations help keep a conversation alive and accessible.

General Considerations

Learning to effectively incorporate quotations is about more than following the rules—it helps you engage with your sources and take authority in your writing. If your previous strategy had been to transcribe several quotes from sources that backed up your argument and then later to drop them into your essays, you weren't alone—you have room to do so much more. Instead of just repeating what other people say, it's important to respond to, build upon, or push back against their ideas. Your research will allow you to join a conversation about your topic.

Instead of dropping in sources unannounced, it's best to introduce them, contextualize them, and unpack them: discuss how they add to your argument (or how they offer meaningful complications that help you push your thinking further). There are very few "formulas" in writing, but using this practice will not only build your credibility with your readers, it will help you deepen your own ideas and build your expertise. See "In Practice" below for a clear example of what this might look like.

Research and writing (and quoting and citing) are recursive (or circular) processes. You write most effectively once you've done enough reading to know where you want to join the conversation, and once you've written for awhile, engaging the sources you have, you learn what else you still need to discover, which sends you back to your research. Citations, then, benefit you as a writer, because they make it easy for you to retrace your steps and move forward in your thinking, and they benefit your readers, making it easy for them to follow your lead when they feel interested in a source you've integrated.

In Practice

ICE: Introduce, Cite, and Explain Your Evidence

Body paragraphs in academic essays contain evidence that supports debatable main ideas that appear in topic sentences. Responsible writers make sure to introduce, cite, and explain quotes and paraphrases used as evidence.

1. **INTRODUCE:** Introduce all your quotes using introductory phrases. Here are some examples:

- **According to Michael Smith,** "you should use the author's first and last name when you cite that author for the first time in your paper" (1).
- **As Smith explains,** "you can introduce your quotes with a number of different phrases" (1).
- **Smith suggests that** "if the introduction to your quote isn't a dependent clause, it doesn't need to be followed by a comma" (1).
- **Smith observes the following in his article:** "When you use a colon to introduce a quote, you need a complete sentence preceding the colon" (1).

Why do this? Introductory phrases like these serve two purposes: 1) they call your reader's attention to the fact that you're pulling in an outside source, and 2) your choice of verbs can help you characterize the nature of the quote. "According to Michael Smith…" has a slightly different meaning than "as Smith explains…" (implies a bit more authority), which is also different from "Smith suggests that" (not a set-in-stone fact but a theory) and "Smith observes" (something describable, implies Smith's neutrality). Further, "Michael Smith insists…" is a way of attributing some urgency to what Smith says. There are a multitude of ways to introduce sources; be aware that your verb choices have implications.

2. **CITE:** Provide appropriate parenthetical citations for all quotes and paraphrases (but not summaries). Check the appropriate style guide for guidelines, e.g., MLA, APA, or Chicago. Here are some guidelines for MLA style citation:

- If the author's name appears in the introduction to the quote or in the paraphrase, it doesn't have to appear in the parenthetical reference, as the citations above illustrate.
- If the author's name does not appear in the introduction to the quote, the name must appear in the parenthetical reference. See the following example of a cited paraphrase:

> Some professors at UM take points off of your final paper grade if you don't cite paraphrased or quoted material correctly (Smith 1).

Why do this? Three reasons: 1) it builds your credibility by acknowledging where you've found information or ideas, 2) it visually indicates that you're engaging with someone else's ideas in order to shape your own, and 3) it helps your reader locate the source on your works cited or bibliography in the event that they want to look it up directly.

3. **EXPLAIN:** Make sure to explain your quotes. Provide analysis that ties them back to your main idea or topic sentence. In other words, comment on the evidence in order to incorporate it into the argument you're making.

Why do this? By the time you write your essay, you may be familiar enough with your sources that their meaning seems self-evident. However, your readers aren't inside your head, and their context may lead them to read your source differently than you. Your job is to guide your readers to your interpretation. Another benefit of this approach is that it helps you engage more thoroughly with your source to build your ideas; if you cannot articulate why the source matters, you haven't thought it through well enough yet.

Exercise

Here's an example of a whole academic body paragraph* that illustrates ICE: introduction, citation, and explanation. Where do you see each element in this paragraph?:

Despite their competence as readers and writers, these young teachers have just begun to understand and participate in the changing ecology of literacy described above, particularly in adopting a view that digital writing is worthy of attention in schools. Grabill and Hicks argue that "[u]sing ICTs (Information Communication Technologies) isn't enough; critically understanding how these writing technologies enable new literacies and meaningful communication should also be a core curricular and pedagogical function of English education" (307). While our experience as teacher educators, especially in the context of Kristen's course, shows us that adopting this perspective is difficult, we feel that there are compelling social reasons to do so.

For some helpful guidance and practice on identifying and citing sources clearly, check out U of M Library's Research Guides (http://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=283364&p=1887163).
For further insight and advice, take a look at Sweetland's "Beyond Plagiarism" page (http://www.beyondplagiarism.sweetland.lsa.umich.edu/).

Further Reading

McMillen, Paula S. and Eric Hill. "Why Teach 'Research as Conversation' in Freshman Composition Courses?: A Metaphor to Help Librarians and Composition Instructors Develop a Shared Model." *Research Strategies* 20 (2005): 3-22.

*(Sample paragraph taken from page 62 of Turner, Kristen Hawley, and Troy Hicks. "'That's not Writing': Exploring the Intersection of Digital Writing, Community Literacy, and Social Justice." Community Literacy Journal 6.1 (2011): 55---78. Print.)

Adapted from a handout created by Dr. Liliana M. Naydan, Pennsylvania State University - Abington