

Integrating Sources Into Your Writing

Use Sources to Support Your Argument

The use of evidence in each paragraph not only supports your topic sentence, but by doing so, supports the claim made in your thesis. To provide evidence, you need to look to appropriate sources. Here are a few examples of where to find credible source material:

- Online Scholarly Databases such as EBSCO or JSTOR
- Newspapers and Magazines such as the *New York Times* and *TIME*
- Textbooks
- Academic Journals
- When in doubt, go to the library!

Quote, Paraphrase, or Summary?

A quote is exact phrasing from a source — word for word, while a paraphrase is a restatement of a section of the source in your own words. A summary is similar to a paraphrase because you reword the ideas stated in the source. However, in a summary you cover main points only, while a paraphrase represents a broader range of ideas from the source.

Whether summarizing, paraphrasing, or using direct quotes, it is important to properly integrate sources and give attribution to your source.

Give Attribution to Your Source

Any information that does not come directly from your own knowledge, or is not generally considered to be common knowledge, must be cited. First, you need to introduce your source by using a signal phrase.

A signal phrase indicates that you are about to use a source, names the author and the source, and provides context.

Common Ways to Use Signal Phrases:

According to data collected by the CDC . . .

In her article “The 2016 Pirelli Calendar May Signal a Cultural Shift,” Vanessa Friedman asserts that . . .

Co-founder and CEO of Microsoft, Bill Gates, notes that . . .

Example Body Paragraph:

In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, J.K. Rowling suggests through her portrayal of Hagrid that appearance can be misleading. Although he is one of the most loved characters in the Harry Potter universe, his initial confrontation with Harry strikes intimidation in the young boy’s heart. The narrator notes that Hagrid’s face is “almost completely hidden by a long, shaggy mane of hair and a wild, tangled beard,” and his eyes, “glint[ing] like black beetles,” peer down at Harry (Rowling 46). Harry’s anxiety seeps through the page as he is confronted by an intimidating figure, and because this description paints such a scary picture, the reader might expect Hagrid to be a rather frightening person as the book progresses. This initial description, however, is contrasted by Hagrid’s true character. Besides serving as a trusted informant to Dumbledore and a crucial ally to Harry and his friends, Hagrid displays an immense compassion for animals, an affection so powerful it sometimes reduces the giant to tears. Hagrid’s humble actions and earnest compassion show that appearances can be misleading, a theme that many characters mirror in the book.

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BODY PARAGRAPHS

Organization & Clarity

Create Body Paragraphs Based on Your Thesis Statement

The thesis statement organizes your argument, and the body paragraphs of the essay work to reinforce this argument throughout the entire paper.

Focus on one main idea for each paragraph. Every paragraph should have a clear statement of topic (topic sentence), which relates directly to the thesis (main idea) of your paper. Each sentence contributes to the overall construction of a coherent paragraph.

All paragraphs should be wrapped up by the end, and often, the concluding sentence in a paragraph will be a transition. The transition sets up the next paragraph and links the ideas of the two paragraphs.

While each paragraph is its own entity, keep in mind that the purpose of every body paragraph is to consistently reinforce, or “prove” the thesis statement.

Ultimately, the way each paragraph is written and how you assemble these pieces in the body of your paper, will determine the coherence of your writing. You want to create a logical order that the reader can easily follow from the introduction to the conclusion.

Each Body Paragraph Should Include

Topic Sentence

This is a statement of topic, or the main idea of the paragraph that ties directly to the thesis. This sets up your paragraph to help “prove” your thesis.

Development of Topic

Develop the ideas presented in the topic sentence beyond your original statement. This can be done in multiple sentences, and will introduce your examples.

Examples

Examples are quotes, statistics, facts, or other information from source material. The examples support the topic sentence and are the actual information you will use to “prove” the main point of your paragraph, and therefore, your thesis.

Explanations

Explanations connect your examples to the topic. The explanations show that you understand the relationship between the source material and the topic sentence, and will allow the reader to understand your argument as well.

Conclusion

Wrap it up—end your paragraph in a way that lets your reader know you are moving on to the next idea. You may need to use a transition to connect the main ideas of one paragraph to the next.

Create an Outline to Organize Your Ideas

Pre-writing

Constructing an outline, whether formal or informal, will help shape the overall structure of your essay as well as each individual paragraph.

Construction begins with the bare bones; think of it as framing a house. Once the house has a basic structure, or frame, the builder can begin to understand what the finished house will look like. Focus on one paragraph at a time to stay on track.

Post-writing

In addition to creating an outline to organize ideas before writing, you can also use an outline after writing your draft. This is called reverse outlining. You insert the main points of your writing into the outline.

This gives you an overview of the organization of your paper and allows you to see if you have clearly represented your thesis throughout the body of the paper. A reverse outline can help you find the areas where you need to further elaborate on your ideas and help you identify the areas that need improvement.

Keep in Mind:

Subsequent paragraphs should follow the same basic structure.

Pay attention to how each paragraph connects. If there is no transition, is one needed? Does the transition at the end of one logically set up the next?

To develop your ideas within a paragraph draft an outline.

I. Main idea (this will develop into your topic sentence)

A. supporting point (example)

1. elaboration (explanation)

B. supporting point (example)

1. elaboration (explanation)

C. supporting point (example)

1. elaboration (explanation)

Example of a format for a simple outline.

Example of a simple outline:

Thesis statement:

In her book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* J.K. Rowling uses character description to set up plot themes and complex development of character relationships.

I. J.K. Rowling's initial description of Hagrid in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is misleading

A. Even though he is a beloved character in the book, his appearance makes him seem very scary

1. His face is hidden by shaggy hair

2. His overall figure is imposing

B. Harry feels nervous/intimidated by Hagrid

1. Harry's discomfort/anxiety toward Hagrid is apparent during their first meeting

C. Hagrid's appearance is in contrast to who he is as a person

1. Hagrid is a trusted friend of Dumbledore

2. Becomes a friend and ally to Harry and his friends

3. Hagrid has a great love and compassion for animals

**In this example, main points and ideas have been outlined. The ideas expressed will be developed and supported in the body paragraph.*