

*An Introduction to...*

## *Citation and Use of Sources*

*Why do we use sources?*

**In most academic traditions, it is important to show not only what you know, but what other established authorities have said as well.** And since assigned writing is typically used by instructors to gauge a student's understanding of the topic, it is important to show how your ideas relate to (or *disagree with*) prior scholarship. (This is actually cultural; in some academic traditions, it is more typical to use ideas from established authorities exclusively and expect your audience to know where these ideas originated.) Scholars integrate the research of others into their work in order to participate in the "give and take" of ideas in their field. Sources, therefore, may be used as evidence for your claims, as contrasting views, or as a means of establishing the state of research already conducted on the topic.

*If I depend on other sources, do I still express my own thoughts?*

**Yes: Think of a braid.** If you took three different colored ribbons—one representing your ideas, the other strands representing your sources—and braided them, you would have a single braid of clearly distinct strands. In the same way, your original thinking will create the main thread of your paper, which responds to and interacts with the other threads of your sources. When you use proper citation, your readers always know which information you borrowed and which you generated yourself.<sup>1</sup>

**Maintain balance.** As you develop your paper, be conscious of the text's proportion of original ideas to research. Too much borrowed material leaves no room for you to process the material and form new conclusions; the paper must still present original thinking so that it is saying something new and contributing to the scholarship of the discipline. Conversely, papers lacking research leave readers wondering how your ideas fit into the existing scholarship. Such papers suggest the author may have neglected relevant research, which weakens the paper dramatically.

*What is citation?*

When scholars employ the ideas, facts, or words of another source, they indicate (cite) the original source. This is done in different ways in different academic disciplines, the differences

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<sup>1</sup> Andrea Cleves. Object lesson designed by Professor of Communication at Normandale Community College. (Notice I have attributed credit to the scholar who first devised this analogy.)

between them largely due to scholars' differing needs. (For example, The American Psychological Association (APA) always indicates the year of the source in-text, assuring that the reader is conscious of emerging research regarding treatments, diagnoses, therapies, etc.) Other disciplines, including theology, often need to elaborate or explain sources further, and choose to do so via footnotes; this allows the text to be free of asides and parenthetical explanations while allowing the reader to find out more about the context and interpretation of sources at the bottom of the page. This format, based on *The Chicago Manual of Style* (The University of Chicago being a leader in historical studies), goes one step further: the information you provide at the bottom of the page is abbreviated, lacking some publication details which are included unabridged in the Bibliography.

(See *The Chicago Manual of Style* (15<sup>th</sup> Ed. ) for more details.)

### ***Why do we cite sources?***

1. **Academic Community.** Your readers may want to access your sources for further research. For this reason, in-text citations (footnotes) contain specific page numbers to point readers to the exact origin of particular borrowed material. Likewise, your alphabetized reference list provides readers with a comprehensive list of your sources.
2. **Ethical obligation.** Western academia holds that any published ideas, research, and/ or language produced by an author remain the property of that author. To present material someone else created as your own constitutes intellectual fraud, also known as **plagiarism**. This is a serious offense. (Intellectual property includes sources from the Internet.) And since it is impossible to tell whether one intentionally or accidentally fails to cite, the burden to cite accurately is on you, the writer.

### ***How do I present borrowed material in my writing?***

**1) Direct Quotation:** Excerpting exact words from a source.

*Example:* Smith argues, "Birds are truly foolish creatures."<sup>2</sup>

*Benefits:* Direct quotations provide a sense of the original source's exact meaning, without the lens of the paper's author.

*When do I use direct quotations?* When the wording from a source is especially unique, poignant, or controversial.

*Caution:* Avoid overusing quotations. If you can communicate the same idea just as effectively

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<sup>2</sup> Colin Smith, "Silly Birds Everywhere," *American Fowl* 17, no. 6 (April 2008): 17.

in your own words, do so. This is called *paraphrasing*.

*Proper Citation:* Whenever using unique or exact words or phrases from a source, indicate this with quotation marks, a superscript numerical citation and footnote which is formatted according to *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

**2) Paraphrase:** Expressing the idea of a specific sentence or sentences from your source in your own words.

*Original quotation:* “Birds are truly foolish creatures.”

*Paraphrase example:* Smith dismisses birds as lacking sound judgment.<sup>3</sup>

(Notice that the author of the paper completely rephrases the same idea from the quotation used in the prior example. In the same way, this paraphrase comes directly out of a single sentence.)

*Benefits:* Paraphrases allow you to blend specific thoughts from your sources seamlessly into your own writing, while still drawing support from other thinkers.

*When do I paraphrase?* Use paraphrases to describe ideas in your sources that you can describe sufficiently in your own words. Paraphrases also allow you to avoid interrupting your narrative with quotations.

*Caution:* Be very careful to cite sources when you paraphrase. Remember, citation is necessary for borrowed ideas, as well as words. Also be sure to use original words and sentence structure when paraphrasing. (See “*How Do I Avoid Plagiarism*,” below.)

*Proper Citation:* Because you have drawn your ideas from a specific place in your source, indicate this in your footnote citation by listing the exact page number.

**3) Summary:** Describing a major section (or the entire source) briefly and in your own words.

*Summary example:* In “Part 1” of his *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer discusses the role of shame in motivating ethical development.<sup>4</sup>

*Benefits:* Summary allows you to quickly reference the major ideas presented by your sources.

*When do I use summary?* When you wish to describe main ideas, rather than specific details or

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>4</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (Macmillan 1955).

thoughts. Also, summaries allow you to quickly evaluate, compare and contrast, or comment on the general ideas of others.

*Caution:* Be careful to fairly describe the ideas of the text.

*Proper Citation:* If summarizing the entire source, no page numbers are necessary. If summarizing a chapter or section, include that information in the footnote.

### ***How do I avoid plagiarizing?***

**When in doubt, cite; over-zealous citation is preferable to a lack of citation.**

You need to cite when...

- ...you use a source and incorporate its content into your text in one of the ways listed above.
- ... you change sources of information (e.g., a change of author or sources by one author) .

When paraphrasing, you should...

...remember to change the wording of the text so that is significantly different from the original; this usually involves changing nouns, verbs and word order but maintaining the original idea. For example, if an author named Ryglund notes that “Today’s theological education is increasingly challenged by citation, ” it may become “According to Ryglund, the difficulty of citation is a growing issue for modern theological education.” Note that the key nouns (names, subjects) may not always be open to manipulation without a change of meaning.

You can add even greater clarity to your use of sources by...

...using signal phrases to indicate when you are using someone else’s ideas. For example, when beginning a paraphrase, indicate this (e.g. *According to Ryglund,* ) Proceed to indicate source use in subsequent text (e.g. *She continues on to note... or He further states that...*).

If you need to make any changes to a quote...

...do so sparingly and use editorial brackets [ ]. Such changes can not alter the overall meaning of a source, and should be employed only in special instances (ease of reading, to jump ahead a short distance within the text, etc.). For example: “Martin Luther, writing of his father, noted that ‘[Hans Luther] was always strict.’” (In this instance, it may have replaced *dad* or *he*, but can not replace *Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg.*)

### **Are there instances in which I don’t have to cite?**

**Yes, but they’re rare.** Occasionally, if you and your audience both know where you are getting the information from, you may not have to cite so diligently. Such common knowledge exceptions are the exception, and it is best to talk to your instructor about their expectations.