

Writing with Sources

In academic writing, we frequently need to study what others have written on a topic. Good persuasive and/or research writing uses what others have said to come to and support your own opinion on a topic. It is not good writing if all you do is provide a series of quotations from other people or cut and paste ideas from one source and then another. Your name will appear on the essay/paper you write; therefore, the bulk of the writing should be your own.

A Word on Sources:

There are two main types of resources: *primary* and *secondary*.

Primary resources are firsthand sources (such as interviews or experiments you conduct, e-mail messages you receive, surveys you develop).

Secondary resources are published materials (books, articles, literary works), movies, songs or other second hand sources.

Information taken from these sources can be paraphrased, summarized, or quoted. Wherever you find the information for your paper, you must acknowledge the source through parenthetical citations next to the “borrowed” information and with complete source information on the works cited page.

As a writer, part of your job is to find credible information on your topic. Credible sources are those that can be believed or proven accurate. With the advent of the internet, this becomes more of a job for researchers. Anyone with the knowledge and access to technology can put anything on the internet. This does not mean the information is appropriate for use in academic writing. You must check your resources to make sure they are accurate and current before you use them.

Once you find credible sources, your job is to merge them with your own ideas to write an essay, report, or research paper. The guidelines in this manual will help you through this process. You, however, will have to work to develop a consistent voice for your paper. You do not want your paper to read like one person wrote one part and someone else work another part.