Integrating Evidence Into Your Paragraphs

Now that you have a first draft, you can work on each part of it until you are satisfied that your writing conveys what you want to say. A good place to begin your revision is by looking at each body paragraph to make sure that your evidence helps to make your ideas clear and easy to understand.

You have already written topic sentences for each section of your paper. If a section has more than one paragraph, you can now make sure each one has a topic sentence. Each paragraph consists mostly of your own ideas combined with the information you have taken from sources. To effectively use that source information, you need to incorporate it gracefully into your work.

EXAMPLE OF A PARAGRAPH WITH EVIDENCE

**Topic Sentence:** The value of independence is one reason why young and old people become isolated from each other.

**Explanation of topic sentence with supporting evidence:** Being independent is an important quality of life for most Americans. Since childhood, people have been taught to be independent. The notion continues through their lives until they become old. Margaret Mead (1971), an American anthropologist, writes in her article, “Grandparents Have Copped Out,” that old people don’t want to be a burden to their children so they try to live their lives independently. That is, old people do not want to interfere with their children’s lives. Young people also believe their lives will be better without their parents as constant companions.

**Concluding Sentence:** Consequently, communication between the generations is limited and isolation gradually occurs.

Three Steps for Integrating Your Evidence

To integrate each piece of evidence from your sources into your own well-written paragraph, follow these steps:

1. **Paraphrase or quote each piece of evidence**
2. **Introduce the evidence**
3. **Connect the evidence to the topic sentence**

**Adapted from:**
Using Quotations

We use direct quotations in only a few circumstances:

• When the original is written in poetic language or provides a unique image as in this description of the differences between a woman and her Chinese grandmother:

“The difference between (my grandmother’s and my) feet reminds me of the incredible history we hold between us like living bookends. We stand like sentries at either side of a vast gulf.” - Janet Wu, “Homework Bound”

• When the original was spoken or written by a famous person and is generally recognizable as a famous saying. For example, we would never try to paraphrase the beginning of President Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address:

“For four score and seven years ago out fathers brought forth upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

Using Paraphrases

Much more often, writers paraphrase evidence from sources. In some cultures, it’s considered acceptable or even good taste to copy from the writings of experts or classical authors. However, in Western academic culture, writing someone else’s ideas or words as if they were your own without acknowledging the original author is called plagiarism, and is considered very dishonorable behavior.

Documenting Sources

In addition to paraphrasing almost all the pieces of evidence you plan to use, you will need to document the original author. It lets the reader know that you are presenting information from another person. Referring to the original author helps to establish your honesty and reliability as a writer, and it is expected in academic writing in U.S. universities.

Introducing the Evidence

Once you have decided whether to paraphrase or quote each piece of evidence, you need to frame it, or introduce it, telling where it comes from.

• Include the author’s name every time you use evidence from your sources
• The source title is optional

Here are three formats for introducing your source:

1. Format choices when you know the name of the author
2. Format when you don’t know the name of the author
3. Format when you want to add information about the author

**Adapted from:
1. When you know the author

Author: Jim Clark  
Article: College Success  
Year: 2007  

Choice 1: [In the article, “College Success”] Clark (2010) wrote that students should study two hours for every hour in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepositional Phrase title optional</th>
<th>Subject Author &amp; date</th>
<th>Verb Simple past or present perfect</th>
<th>Noun Clause (that + full sentence) -Paraphrase or quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the article, OR In the article, “College Success,”</td>
<td>Clark (2010)</td>
<td>wrote</td>
<td>that students should study two hours for every hour in class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choice 2: According to Clark (2010), [in “College Success,”] students should study two hours for every hour in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepositional Phrase w/author &amp; date</th>
<th>Prepositional Phrase w/title (optional)</th>
<th>Full Sentence -Paraphrase or quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>According to Clark (2010)</td>
<td>in “College Success,”</td>
<td>students should study two hours for every hour in class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choice 3: Clark (2010) wrote [in his article “College Success,”] that students should study two hours for every hour in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Author &amp; date</th>
<th>Verb Simple past or present perfect</th>
<th>Prepositional Phrase w/title (optional)</th>
<th>Noun Clause (that + full sentence) -Paraphrase or quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clark (2010)</td>
<td>wrote</td>
<td>in his article “College Success,”</td>
<td>that students should study two hours for every hour in class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. When you don’t know the author

**Choice 1:** The article “College Survival Tips” (2007) recommended that students prepare a daily schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article title &amp; date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past or present perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun Clause (that + full sentence) - Paraphrase or quotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The article “College Survival Tips” (2007)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. When you want to add information

Sometimes it is useful to include information about the author if he or she is an expert on the topic. Do this only the first time you use a source.

**Choice 1:** Clark (2010), director of the College Success program at Winston University, wrote that students should study two hours a day for every hour in class.

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<th>Subject</th>
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<tr>
<td>Author &amp; date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noun Phrase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past or present perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun Clause (that + full sentence) - Paraphrase or quotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark (2010), director of the College Success program at Winston University,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Common Verbs for Introducing Evidence

The verb you choose when introducing evidence can give the readers a clue about your opinion of the information.

If you have a **neutral stance** towards the evidence, use these verbs:

- wrote
- stated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clark (2010) remarked that students should study two hours for every hour in class.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>explained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noted</td>
</tr>
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</table>

You can signal **agreement** or **disagreement** or **doubt** about a piece of information by using one of these verbs:

- argued

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clark (2010) claimed that students should study two hours for every hour in class.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>suggested</td>
</tr>
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</table>

If you disagree or have doubts about the idea, the reader will likely expect you to provide a contrasting opinion.

Clark (2010) argued that students should study two hours for every hour in class. On the other hand, other experts in the field state that too much studying causes student burnout and stress.

To **present information** from a **study**, use one of these verbs:

- found

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clark’s (2010) research on successful college students showed that students who study two or more hours for every hour in class are more likely to earn a GPA of 3.0 or higher.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>demonstrated</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Adapted from:**
Connecting the Evidence to the Topic Sentence

Finally, you complete the integration process by connecting each paraphrase or quotation with the flow of your own writing. Explain why you are using each piece of evidence and what links it to the topic sentence of the paragraph. This is similar to what you do in a conversation. If the person you are talking to asked, “Why are you telling me this fact?” you would explain where you found the fact and why you think it is important. You can provide the connecting explanation before the evidence, after the evidence, or in both places.

EXAMPLE OF A PARAGRAPH WITH INTEGRATED EVIDENCE

**Topic Sentence:** The value of independence is one reason why young and old people become isolated from each other.

**Connecting Explanation:** Being independent is an important quality of life for most Americans. Since childhood, people have been taught to be independent. The notion continues through their lives until they become old.

**Evidence:** Margaret Mead (1971), an American anthropologist, writes in her article, “Grandparents Have Copped Out,” that old people don’t want to be a burden to their children so they try to live their lives independently.

**Connecting Explanation:** That is, old people do not want to interfere with their children’s lives. Young people also believe their lives will be better without their parents as constant companions.

**Concluding Sentence:** Consequently, communication between the generations is limited and isolation gradually occurs.

In this paragraph:

- The connecting explanation that comes before the evidence explains how the idea of independence is connected to old age.

- The evidence is given as a paraphrase and includes the name of the author, the article title (which is optional), and some information about the author. In paragraphs that follow this one, the writer will include only the last name of the author, Mead, when this source is introduced.

- The connecting explanation that comes after the evidence provides further information that relates the value of independence to the relationship between the young and the old.

**Adapted from:**
Now You Try

The following is a well-constructed paragraph in which the evidence has been smoothly integrated into the writing.

The first characteristic of risk is that the outcome of the activity is uncertain. When the person begins the activity, he is not sure whether or not he will be successful. In her article “Taking the Bungee Plunge,” Gina Bellafonte (1992) write about this uncertainty by saying “we build sustainable confidence not by taking life-threatening risks but by gradually working at things we never thought we could achieve” (p. 80). In other words, risky activity does not have to be dangerous, but it must involve trying to accomplish something we are not sure we are capable of doing. The key here is that we try and succeed in doing something that is not easy for us to do. This also points to a second characteristic of risk; a risky activity must be challenging.

1. Put brackets [ ] around the topic sentence.
2. Underline once any sentences or phrases that provide connecting information before the evidence.
3. Circle the citation information.
4. Put parentheses around the quote that is used as evidence and double parentheses around the paraphrase of that quote.
5. Underline twice the connecting explanation after the evidence.
6. Underline with a wavy line the conclusion and/or transition to the next paragraph.

Including Background Information

In many cases, as you integrate a piece of evidence from a source into your writing, you will notice that the source idea you want to paraphrase refers to an earlier section of the passage. In this situation it is necessary to briefly explain the background information leading up to the part you are using as evidence in your paraphrase. In other words, a paraphrase must include enough of the original passage so that it makes sense; this is part of doing a good job of integrating evidence into your paragraph.

Original: But the trend has turned out to be more insidious and widespread that previously thought. -Michael Hastings, 2003

Weak: The fad is even more common and difficult to get rid of than expected (Hastings, 2003).

• It isn’t enough to simply paraphrase this short passage; you must begin by explaining what “the trend” is. Looking at the context in the original article, we can see that the paragraph discusses how more and more people all over the world are becoming overweight by eating American fast food. A good paraphrase will explain this.

Strong: The tendency for people everywhere to gain weight by eating American fast food is more prevalent and more difficult to stop than expected (Hastings, 2003).

Now You Try:

Write a stronger paraphrase of the section of the following passage that is in bold. As you study the weak paraphrase, consider how to include enough background information so that the paraphrase makes sense.

Original: This year’s report focuses on the growing global “consumer class” – defined as individuals whose “purchasing power parity” in local currency is more than $7,000 a year (roughly the poverty level in Western Europe). As economies expand – accelerated by globalization that has opened up markets, greater efficiency in manufacturing, and advancing technologies – that consumer class has grown rapidly. It’s the main reason there are more than 1 billion cell phones in the world today. -Brad Knickerbocker, 2004

Weak: That's why people currently own more than 1 billion cell phones worldwide.

Stronger: