



Finding and Incorporating Evidence

What is evidence?

Most papers require you to make an argument or take a position on a subject. Throughout your paper you should discuss and support your argument by using evidence.

Evidence is not the same as the argument or claim. Evidence is used to help strengthen and support your argument and justify your position—for example:

Claim: Exposure to violent television programming increases children's propensity for violent and aggressive behavior.

VS.

Evidence: Children who watched 10 hours of television containing violence displayed more aggressive and violent behavior than a group of children who watched 10 hours of non-violent programming (Huesmann, 2003).

Types of Evidence

Evidence can be compiled from print and electronic sources including: books, websites, and periodicals

- Your professor may specify sources to focus on, like particular authors or books, depending on the paper topic/genre.
- Different fields require different evidence. For example, a media analysis could include examples of recurring symbols in film, while a research paper could include charts, graphs, and statistics.
- Some assignments require research that you have done yourself including: interviews, experiments, surveys, first-hand experience or anecdotes, personal experiences, and observations.

Make sure you choose **credible**, **accurate**, and **reliable** sources!

Questions to ask about a source:

1. Does the source contain up-to-date information/is it recent?
2. Who is the author? Are they respected in their field?
3. Is the author biased?
4. Is the author neutral?
5. Is the author providing a balanced perspective?

For online sources, be especially mindful—make sure there is an author available or if not, be sure that it is from a reputable organization, media outlet, or academic institution. (You should use the organization as the author when you cite it!)

Here are some credible online sources:

- Reputable news sites: *New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Washington Post*, *Reuters*
- Organization sites: *Gallup*, *Pew Research Center*, *Center for Disease Control*, *National Organization of Health*
- Scholarly or peer-reviewed: *JSTOR*, *Harvard University*, *Academic Search Complete*, *Google Scholar*, *UCLA*, *PubMed*

Wikipedia is fine as a starting point for your research, but—**never use Wikipedia as a source!** If you do find something that you'd like to use in your paper, look for the original source at the bottom of the Wikipedia page and do further research from there.

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Incorporating Evidence

Evidence does not always speak for itself. As a writer, you have to make sure that the connection between your argument and the evidence is clear. Otherwise it's just a piece of information, rather than support for your larger claim/argument.

Avoid citing evidence that is merely restating your claim. Instead, cite the reasoning and evidence for the claim. Don't look for the author's thesis; look for their supporting evidence.

Ways to incorporate evidence:

In support of your argument: use evidence that agrees with your position, then expand on it with your own thoughts

Counter to your argument: argue against evidence that counters your own to further strengthen your position

Use **2 opposing sources** against each other to strengthen your argument

Quotations

When to use direct quotations:

- If the author's words are very distinctive, and are good illustration of your point
- If you are using a particular source for an author's specific expertise in support of your claim
- If you are analyzing an author's tone, diction, or use of certain words or phrases

Avoid "dropped" quotes. Make sure quotations are fully integrated and connected to your own words and your claim. For each quote, introduce, discuss, and follow up in ways that connect it directly to your argument.

Use *lead-in phrases*:

- **Maté (2009) emphasizes that** "the effects of early stress or adverse experiences directly shape both the psychology and the neurobiology of addiction in the brain" (p. 36).
- **According to a recent study**, children who watched an excessive amount of television were more likely to develop antisocial personality traits and exhibit criminal behavior (Robertson, McAnally, & Hancox, 2013, p. 439).

See
"Quote
Sandwich"
Resource

Paraphrases

- Take a specific section of text and put it in your own words.
- One way to avoid plagiarism when paraphrasing is to pretend you are describing what the source material says to someone who has not read it.

See
"Strategies for
Paraphrasing"
Resource

Summaries

- Summarizing is offering an overview of an entire text. A summary can be used when providing background information or mentioning a counterargument.
- Summaries are best used when you have limited space and a large number of sources.

Charts, Graphs, etc.

Visual representations of facts can be very useful to your argument.

- You still must create context for the reader to ensure they make the connection between the visual evidence and your argument.

****Remember to cite your sources in text (and list them on your reference page) when using quotes, paraphrases, summaries, and charts**