
Research & References

Many of the writing topics you will address require that you conduct research or analyze a text to support your opinion or inform the reader. When using research or references to a text, it is important that you properly cite the sources, such as books, Websites, reports, articles, or interviews.

Why do we need to document research carefully?

- To give credit to the original authors and creators of the words or ideas.
- To allow the reader to locate, review for accuracy, and utilize the research you have provided.
- To prevent plagiarism, the act of presenting another person's work as one's own.

Plagiarism can lead to serious consequences. To prevent plagiarism:

- Be sure to take careful notes while you research your topic.
- Clearly distinguish between your ideas and those of the sources you use in your essay by using references, introductions to references, and citations at all stages of the writing process.

Types of References

When you read something interesting, unique, or informative, you may want to include those words or ideas in your own writing. Ways that you can include information from another source in your essay include:

Summarizing

Take a long passage from a source and put it into your own words. In a summary, you may condense a large amount of information into a shorter synopsis. In Example 1, a few pages of information are condensed into one sentence in this summary, and the main idea about the topic—the participants' performance in school—is stated. The statement is introduced by the research type and authors, and the page numbers on which the information can be found are stated in the parenthetical note.

Example 1:

According to a study by Tierney, Grossman, and Resch, students who are involved in the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program do better in school (35-37).

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Quoting

Repeat the exact words of the author when his or her idea or statement is written in a precise or unique way. Quoting requires the use of quotation marks. In Example 2, the writer thought the phrase significant enough that he or she stated it exactly as it appeared in the research. Quotations indicate that the words are taken directly from the source, and the parenthetical note includes the authors' names and the page number of the source.

Example 2:

"Being involved with BBBS begins to improve the youth's school performance" (Tierney, Grossman, Resch 36).

Paraphrasing

Reword the text using a combination of your own words and the exact words of the source. Remember that using the exact words from a text requires the use of quotation marks. You might paraphrase at the sentence level. In Example 3, the paraphrase combines the exact words from the research with the writer's clarification and introduction to provide a summation of the organization's impact. The terms that are quoted are precise, and the author thought it important to include them word for word. The authors' last names and the page number of the source are listed in the parenthetical note at the end of the paraphrase.

Example 3:

The study showed that there were only slight gains in "self-worth, social acceptance, or self-confidence," (Tierney, Grossman, Resch 39) but my experience was different. I feel exponentially more confident than when I began in the Big Sisters organization.

Introducing Quotations and other References

It is important that the reader be able to distinguish the writer's ideas from those of others uncovered through research. When incorporating others' ideas in your writing, consider introducing the research in the following manner:

According to {Author's name}, "... (Page).

Example 4:

According to Curie's biography found on the Nobel site, her early career was difficult: the labs in which she worked were often ill equipped, and she and Pierre got jobs as teachers to support themselves (page 2).

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{Author's name} states, ". . ." (Page).

Example 5:

In her poem, "Success," Emily Dickinson wrote that "people who never win are the ones who want a victory the most" (84).

The character says, ". . ." (Author's name and Page).

Example 6:

At the end of "Araby," the narrator states, "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger" (Joyce par 10). The boy admits that his pride has clouded his actions and has contributed to his own disappointment.

When you introduce the reference effectively, the reader will know where the writer's ideas have stopped and those of another have begun!