

Writing a Research Paper: Weave info from sources into your paper

From the [SUNY Potsdam Writers' Block](#)

As you know, it takes time to find relevant sources, to read them to be sure they help you, and to go back to find more relevant items. Give it the time it needs.

- See [6 Simple Steps for Writing a Research Paper](#) here.
- [Request a research appointment](#) with librarians to find relevant sources on your specific topic.
- [Book with the Writers' Block peer tutors](#) for guidance as you turn your sources into an outline.

When you write up your research paper, it can be tricky to smoothly fit information from those sources together with your own thoughts and words.

We call this writing task “integrating your sources.”

- Read all about it in *Little Seagull Handbook* sections R-3 and R-4.
- College teachers have high expectations for integrating sources in a research paper. See how the Writers' Block tutors [explain that in their "paraphrasing guide."](#)
- Teachers expect more because how you use sources and talk about them shows what you're learning. Do you clearly show when you're using an outside source? How well do you understand what the source said? Can you discuss the important info in your own voice?

“What exactly do I need to do?” Four key steps to integrate sources into your paper:

- **Finding useful info:** When reading a good source, highlight or color-code the most useful parts for your paper. Then practice taking notes to summarize the key info in your own words. Don't just copy and paste but completely reword it. How would you explain the key info to a friend?
- **Use a signal phrase:** When you're about to give information from a source, academic writing uses specific language to signal your reader that you're moving into sourced info.
 - These pages explain signal phrases: [Purdue OWL](#) & [GMU Writing Center](#)
- **Your words or the source's words?** You'll combine paraphrase, summary, & short/long quote.
 - [Purdue OWL](#) covers these skills
 - [GMU advises us when to use paraphrase or quote](#)

- Writers' Block tutors talk about paraphrasing in an [advanced way](#) & in an [introductory way](#).
- **Discuss the evidence from each source:** Whenever you present information from a source, you must also restate it or discuss it in your own words. Show that you understand the source's points accurately and how they fit into your main idea for the paragraph --- or perhaps your thesis statement. You can do this in just a few, on-point sentences.

“But show me what it looks like!” Sample papers by real college students are full of helpful examples.

- In this [sample paper](#), the student has written accurate paraphrases in her own words and cited them in APA format, for a psychology class. [In this sample paper](#), the student has paraphrased and quoted many times for a history paper, citing the sources each time in MLA format.
- Find more sample papers in your ***Little Seagull Handbook***, Fourth Edition. MLA samples are on pages 58, 68, 92, 193. APA samples are on pages 76 and 233 and a Chicago footnote sample is on 273.