

## Using Source Materials Effectively

The following page presents four of the main techniques which writers can use to bring texts into their arguments. Each technique achieves a different effect; some strategies remind the reader that the source information is coming from an outside expert, while other strategies demonstrate how well the writer has been able to merge her/his ideas with those of the source. Both approaches are valuable, but their value ultimately depends on the effect the writer wanted to convey. Regardless of the technique you choose, be sure to follow your incorporated source material with additional reflection and commentary of your own; as a good rule of thumb, each paragraph should end with your final word on a matter.

**Stand-alone direct quote:** A sentence-length quotation taken directly from the source text.

- Use when the original author has expressed something so well that you could not replicate it or when only the words of an expert will suffice as evidence for your claim.
- Introduce with a brief phrase that establishes authorship (like "Hertsgaard claims" or "According to Twichell") or embed the quote into an existing sentence.
- Follow with a brief interpretation that demonstrates how this quote connects to the larger argument (or to other texts being considered).

*Examples:*

- Caryn Ganz explains, "American culture is fascinated with celebrities and their personal lives, and as a result, famous people end up seeming very important" (2). This fascinated attention to famous people undermines the day-to-day heroism of ordinary people.
- Marchand's article said that "no dependencies in wealth could prevent the humblest citizens from retiring to a setting in which they could contemplate their essential equality" (p. 151). Advertisers exploit this belief in "essential equality" by marketing products that appeal to people's desire to live like the wealthy do.

**Block quote:** An extended quotation of 40 or more words (or 4 or more lines).

- Use when a source expresses a complex idea in better and fewer words than you would need.
- Use in moderation or you risk sending the impression that you are just trying to lengthen your paper.
- Introduce with a brief phrase that establishes authorship (like "Hertsgaard claims" or "According to Twichell"), then follow with a brief interpretation that demonstrates how this quote connects to the larger argument (or to other texts being considered).

*Examples:*

- Higgins examines Eliza while she is bustling about the portico of St. Paul's church, where he says,  
A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere—no right to live. Remember that you [Eliza] are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech: that your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and the Bible and don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon. (Shaw 22)

- In Takaki's book *A Different Mirror*, Dean Fed Lukermann of Minnesota said,

Many educators stress, multiculturalism has an intellectual purpose. By allowing us to see events from the viewpoints of different groups, a multicultural curriculum enables us to reach toward a more comprehensive understanding of American history. (Takaki 7)

Takaki's point is valid because America harbors people from all walks of life.

**Manipulated direct quote:** An abbreviated or altered form of an original text, used to emphasize brief elements from a source, but in balance with your commentary.

- Use ellipses [. . .] to indicate omitted text in the middle of a sentence.
- Use square brackets [like this] to indicate any changes you've made to the original text, such as clarified ideas and pronoun or verb shifts.

*Examples:*

- Perhaps if America's media focused on globalization as much as other countries, they would learn to view foreigners as real people of flesh and blood and not as "incomprehensible, abstract stereotypes" (Hertsgaard 109).
- Bader explains within her article, "Larger Than Life" that "role models are admirable individuals who haven't given up their lives...and may even have a few hang-ups...they are therefore more likely than heroes to be free for lunch"(793).

**Paraphrase:** A brief summary of a source's ideas, using your own words and structure.

- Use to draw in another writer's ideas or information, but with an emphasis on your interpretation or reflection on that information.
- Try to paraphrase without the original source in front of you. You can always check your accuracy later, but you'll be far less tempted to "borrow" too much from the source if you can't actually see while you're writing.

*Example:*

- Darwin claims that a moral being is one who is capable of reflecting on his past actions and their motives and amends his behavior in light of this information. Man has inherent social instincts that have been developed over the ages. These instincts lead to emotions like love and sympathy. Darwin notes that Man has high mental faculties, which help him recollect his past actions. When he fulfills a desire, he will later on reflect on it (264-268).

### **Practice Exercise: Incorporating Source Material**

You are writing a paper on Internet companies and the challenges they have faced since the dot-com bubble burst. You have started the following paragraph, which will be included in the body of your paper.

## **YOUR PARAGRAPH:**

Stocks for Internet companies have rebounded despite an economic downturn, in part because of increased online consumer spending and online advertising. More importantly, Internet companies are finally showing measurable profits.

You have found the following source material, and you want to include it in this paragraph. You haven't yet decided how you want to incorporate Rosenberg's text with yours.

## **YOUR SOURCE:**

There's no question that e-stocks have benefited from momentum trading and sector rotation. But analysts say that this time things are different. They point out that Internet use increased throughout the downturn and that online sales, while still only about 4% of all U.S. retail sales, have been growing steadily. Excluding auctions, online consumer sales in the first half of this year reached \$42.4 billion, up from \$24 billion in the first half of 2001, according to comScore Networks. Online advertising has also rebounded, particularly in the form of paid search listings. All that development has helped bring about the biggest change analysts and portfolio managers latch on to--the rate at which Internet companies are generating actual profits and free cash flow. "At least you can have a rational discussion about what they're really worth instead of 'price to click' and all sorts of other weird made-up metrics," says Kevin Landis, chief investment officer of Firsthand Funds. "They've got real earnings, and they've demonstrated they're not just some crazy, nutty idea." And without an equity market ready to be tapped for easy financing, companies have had to slash costs and focus more on their balance sheets. From Yuval Rosenberg, "E-Stocks Rise Again," *Fortune* (1 September 2003): 163.

On a separate sheet of paper, practice completing this paragraph using the following techniques. Remember that each technique is used for a different reason. Sometimes you want to emphasize the original wording, while other times you want to stress your own interpretation of the material. Choose your information and approach accordingly.

1. Stand-alone direct quote, to immediately follow your final sentence.
2. Block quote.
3. Manipulated direct quote, to fit into the following sentence: These profits conform to industry-wide standards, as opposed to "\_\_\_\_\_."
4. Paraphrase, to immediately follow your final sentence.

*For each example, be sure to follow your incorporated source material with additional reflection and commentary of your own; as a good rule of thumb, each paragraph should end with your final word on a matter.*