

Introducing and Integrating Quotations in MLA Style Papers

Oftentimes in academic writing, you use outside sources to enhance your argument and make it more credible. It can be challenging to insert these sources smoothly without taking away from your voice as a writer. However, if you keep your audience in mind when introducing these references, you'll be able to integrate the outside information with your analysis more effectively.

Introducing Sources:

Have you ever tried to trace your train of thought? Or ever wondered why you started thinking what you did? As a writer, it is your job to make sure your reader is able to follow your thought process on the page, as you analyze and respond to others' voices. When a reader first comes across a reference that isn't your voice, he or she needs to know some background information about that source. Although there are specific formatting and discipline demands (check your syllabus or assignment for these), there are also some general factors to consider:

- Who is the author of the source?
- What are his or her credentials?
- What is the title of the source?
- When was the source published (if date is relevant to how the material will be viewed)?
- Why is this author's text included in your paper?
- How does this material contribute to or reinforce your argument?

Integrating Sources:

After you have adequately introduced your source, you no longer need to mention all of the information listed above in subsequent references; however, you should still be aware of your audience's need for info and context when referencing outside sources in your essay. "Dropped quotations are confusing for readers" (Brennan 10). Did that last sentence stick out to you as disconnected? You probably noticed it because it had quotation marks around it, but now you're wondering, where did the information come from? Who is Brennan? Why is Brennan qualified to say this about quotations? That disconnected sentence is an example of a *dropped quotation*, a type of error in which a quotation isn't part of an author's own sentences, isn't properly introduced, etc. Outside references are simply not as effective in writing unless they have signal phrases (i.e., So-and-so says, or As John Smith noted in this article...) for the reader. A first mention of this source might run along the lines of "Patrick Brennan, in his powerful 2012 article on effective use of sources, states..." In subsequent references to this source, the writer could simply say something like, "Brennan asserts that, when trying to understand an argument, 'Dropped quotations are confusing for readers' (10)." Always remember to keep your audience in mind when using a source; the audience should be able to trace your train of thought.