

# MLA Style: Integrating Sources

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO INTEGRATE A SOURCE?

When you write about research, you need to include bits of information you found from your research, but you can't just plop those bits in without first crediting the original authors and then providing a commentary, analysis, or interpretation.

Integrating sources is the process of weaving research information into your writing in a well-credited and meaningful way.

## WHY DO I NEED TO INTEGRATE MY SOURCES?

Integrated sources make up the backbone of your paper. This is where you show your reader what research you've done and how that research connects to your topic.

Think of your sources as perspectives in a conversation you are leading. You integrate your sources at key points in your paper to support your own ideas and/or to show differences in perspectives between different sources.

## HOW DO I INTEGRATE SOURCES?

Whether you are quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing, you can follow the basic rule of the sandwich to integrate sources. Think of your **source material** as the meat that fits between a top slice of bread (your **introduction/signal phrase**) and the bottom slice of bread (your **commentary/analysis**). See how it works in the breakdown below.



### 1. Top Slice of Bread: **The Signal Phrase.**

A signal phrase helps shift your writing's focus from your ideas to another author's idea. A signal phrase can be made of nothing more than the author's last name and a verb:

*Andrews notes*

*Davis suggests*

*Holt argues*

If it's relevant, you could also add additional information to your signal phrase, like the article title or the author's background:

*According to Greenblatt, a Shakespeare scholar,*

*In his article "Why Photography Matters," Holt suggests*



# Integrating Sources (Cont'd)

## 2. The Meat: **Quote, Summarize, or Paraphrase**

This is where you share bits of information from your research that really get to the heart of your paper's purpose. Make sure all the information you quote, summarize, or paraphrase is relevant to your point.

Weave in your quote, summary, or paraphrase after your signal phrase:

According to Holt, **much of 20th-century photography allows us to peer into history with gritty, unsentimental realism** (2).

Graff, Birkenstein, and Durst believe that response templates can help students **"become active participants in the important conversations of the academic world"** (20).

## 3. Bottom Slice of Bread: **Comment, Analyze, or Expand**

Here's the final, most important piece of the puzzle. You can't just leave the ideas hanging—you've got to say something about those ideas. Why is the information you quoted, summarized or paraphrased significant? Relevant? Interesting? How does it help prove your paper's point?

So here's how the sandwich looks when it's all put together and ready to eat:

Graff, Birkenstein, and Durst believe that response templates can help students **"become active participants in the important conversations of the academic world"** (20). **That is because response templates help students position their own argument in relationship to the arguments of scholars and experts. With the help of templates, students don't just integrate sources, they enter into conversation with their sources.**

## **WHERE DO I FIND MORE INFORMATION?**

From Purdue's Online Writing Lab (OWL):  
[Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing](#)

From Harvard University:  
[The Harvard Guide to Using Sources](#)

From The Learning Center:  
MLA Handout: Advanced Integrating Sources

