**Building Research Papers Tutorial**

**Caption: “I found my sources…Now what?”**

**Objectives:**

In this tutorial you will learn how to:

* Read your sources for understanding
* Find quotes that your support your argument or point of view
* Incorporate sources into your paper

**Read Your Sources**

Ok, you have your topic and some sources. Now what?

This tutorial will walk you through the process of reading, interpreting, and incorporating sources into your work to create cohesive, well-supported arguments.

**Sample Topic**

As an example, let’s pretend you have selected the following topic:

The role of time management in student success.

**Look for Support**

Read carefully to make sure you understand what the author is saying. As you go, look for ideas that support your topic.

3 Ways to Keep Track of the Good Stuff:

* Highlighters
* Index Cards
* Documents

1. Highlight as You Read

Highlight sections you may use in your paper. Does it support a point you want to make? Do you agree or disagree with it?

Example passage:

“Students who complete the freshmen survey are also asked to determine how they compare to their peers on a variety of dimensions; “time management” was added to this survey question in 2004. There were interesting gender differences in the responses. Although women were more likely to rate their time management skills as “above average” or “highest 10 percent” (37.4% versus 31.5%), they were more than twice as likely as men to indicate that they frequently feel overwhelmed by all they have to do (36.4% versus 16.3%) (ACE 2005). Thus, many freshmen appear to recognize the stress associated with poor time management skills. One published study (Nonis 1997) reported that business students with higher perceived control over time experienced lower levels of stress and achieved higher levels of academic performance.While the researcher was unable to establish causality, these findings offer a compelling reason to further explore the value of developing effective time management skills to enhance academic performance. “

In this example passage, the student has highlighted one sentence:

“One published study (Nonis 1997) reported that business students with higher perceived control over time experienced lower levels of stress and achieved higher levels of academic performance.”

Student’s note: This statement might be useful in supporting my argument that time management skills can help to improve student success.

2. Keep Notes on Index Cards

Jot down intriguing ideas and quotes on index cards. Be careful to note where you found them!

Example. There are two handwritten index cards on the page with direct quotes from sources on each:

Card 1 – Time Logs Increase Awareness

“…the freshmen business majors who maintained time logs for this exercise reported significant differences in time use early in the semester versus late in the first semester of college” (Fischer and Lehman 202).

Card 2 – Better Time Management = Less Stress

“Those students with more time management behaviors considered themselves to be more effective at work, had higher levels of morale, and lower levels of stress” (Forbus et al. 112).

3. Create a Notes Document

Try saving your notes in a document. Copy and paste quotes plus citations from the articles you read. You might even note how you can use the idea in your own work.

Example. Screenshot of a Google doc with the following entry:

How time logs can help (Fischer article)

“Students who maintained the time logs achieved insights into their own use of time that are not possible without detailed knowledge of how they use their time. Requiring a time logs may help students in the long run by forcing them to acknowledge how much time they waste throughout the day” (Fischer and Lehman 203).

**Reflect**

Take a break.

Give yourself some time to think about what you read before you begin working on your paper.

This will make it easier to summarize or paraphrase from your sources without copying or unintentionally plagiarizing your source.

Plagiarize definition from Merriam-Webster:

“What is Plagiarism?

* To steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own
* To use (another’s production) without crediting the source
* To commit literary theft
* To present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source” (“Plagiarize”).

**Organize Your Ideas**

Write a thesis statement

Write a sentence that states the viewpoint or argument you intend to prove in your paper. Professors call this a thesis statement or research question.

This helps to clarify exactly what you will write about and is the beginning of organizing the structure of your paper.

How about this?

“Effective time management skills can increase academic success for college students.”

**Create an Outline**

Creating an outline or a mind-map gives you a bird’s eye view of the structure of your paper and argument.

Ask questions:

* How can I support my argument?
* What are the weaknesses in my argument?
* Which ideas, statements, or quotes can I use to defend my point?

**Outlines & Mind Maps**

Outlines

Traditional outlines help you arrange your ideas in the order that you’ll use them in your paper. They can also help you to identify the types of supporting information that you need.

Mind Maps

Mind Maps can help you capture your ideas and make connections. Get messy. Draw lines and arrows to group ideas and show relationships.

**Writing Your Paper**

Now write like the wind! Your ideas are organized and you have evidence. Get it all on paper!

Don’t stop to worry about punctuation or phrasing. You can go back to edit later.

**Finding Balance**

When writing your paper, you will want to find a balance between:

* Your own voice
* The evidence you introduce through your sources

**Support Your Argument**

When you use a quote or a paraphrased source, make sure you explain how the quote relates to or supports your argument.

Otherwise your writing will seem disjointed.

**Incorporating Your Sources**

Make sure your own ideas are the stars of the paper!

Dos and Don’ts:

Do

* Explain Quotes
* Paraphrase
* Cite Ideas

Don’t

* Drop & Run
* String Quotes

**Do – Explain Quotes**

Clearly explain how each quote supports your argument.

Example:

According to Stefanie Weisman, one of the best ways to improve your time management is to “start by creating a semester calendar in which you write down events such as midterms, finals, regular tests, papers, presentations, vacations and holidays” (Weisman 31).

Explanation:

The writer explains that the included quote provides a method for improving time management.

**Do – Paraphrase**

Paraphrase important ideas so they flow with your ideas.

Example:

Multitasking is harder than it looks. Despite the awe-inspiring complexity of the human brain, research reveals that we are basically wired to do one thing at a time (Mei-Ching, Ruthruff & Johnston). \*

\* This entire example of paraphrasing is from the book, *Becoming a Master Student* (Ellis 64).

Explanation:

The writer supports the argument that multitasking is difficult by explaining the findings of a research study in their own words.

**Do – Cite Ideas**

Cite each quote or paraphrased idea that you include in your paper.

Exact Quote:

“For most full-time students, the periods of heightened academic activity occur before midterm, near the drop deadline, and at the end of the semester. While some students may feel this is a diabolical faculty plot, the uneven nature of the academic semester is actually a harbinger of many life cycles beyond college (and a diabolical faculty plot)” (Posey and von Bohlen 49).

Paraphrase:

Most students experience more due dates at certain times of the semester. This can be a reflection of how responsibilities can ebb and flow in your career and home life (Posey and von Bohlen 49).

Explanation:

Whether it is a direct quote or a borrowed idea in your own words, make sure that you correctly cite the source’s author.

**Don’t -- Drop & Run**

Don’t drop large quotations into your paper without explaining how they support your argument.

Example. A quote that may be too long: “Study difficult (or boring) subjects first. If your chemistry problems put you to sleep, get to them first, when you are fresh. We tend to give top priority to what we enjoy studying, yet the course that we find most difficult often require the most creative energy. Save your favorite subjects for later. If you find yourself avoiding a particular subject, get up and hour earlier to study it before breakfast. With that chore out of the way, the rest of the day can be a breeze” (Ellis 89).

Instead: Seek out the most important part of the quote to include. Then use ideas or examples from your own experience to make the quote more meaningful.

Maybe all you need is the first line! “Study difficult (or boring) subjects first.”

**Don’t – String Quotes**

Don’t string together groups of quotes and paraphrased ideas without including your own ideas.

**Not:** “The late author Douglas Adams said of deadlines that he loved ‘the whooshing sound they make as they fly by’” (Posey and von Bohlen 21). “A great way to stay on top of things is to talk through what you have to do today, every morning, out loud to yourself” (Weisman 32).

**Instead:** “The late author Douglas Adams said of deadlines that he loved ‘the whooshing sound they make as they fly by’” (Posey and von Bohlen 21). You can prevent those deadlines from whooshing by using a few simple techniques. One of these techniques is presented by Weisman: “A great way to stay on top of things is to talk through what you have to do today, every morning, out loud to yourself” (32). When you say your to-do list out loud it helps you to remember each task that you need to complete.

Now the quotes are connected by ideas presented by the author, and they better support the writer’s argument.

**Incorporating Sources Activity**

**Try This!**

**Question 1. Choose the passage that best incorporates direct quotes or ideas from sources.\***

Passage 1.

In the story "The Things They Carried," "more than anything, he wanted Martha to love him as he loved her, but the letters were mostly chatty, elusive on the matter of love" (O'Brien 915).

Passage 2.

In the story "The Things They Carried," O'Brien emphasizes Jimmy's love for Martha when he says, "More than anything, he wanted Martha to love him as he loved her, but the letters were mostly chatty, elusive on the matter of love" (915).

\*Both Passage 1 and Passage 2 appear as examples in:

Duggan, Bethany. “Poorly Integrated Quotations.” *Prezi*, 03

October 2012, prezi.com/u3fboczvxh1-/poorly-integrated-

quotations/.

**Question 2. Choose the passage that best incorporates direct quotes or ideas from sources.**

Passage 1.

Procrastination is a major problem for college students. “More than 70 percent of college students admit they’re procrastinators, compared to about 20 percent of the adult population” (Weisman 36). In order to combat the harm of procrastination, Ellis suggests that college students should examine the potential costs of procrastination, plan ahead, and make goals to stay focused (86).

Passage 2.

Weisman says, “More than 70 percent of college students admit they’re procrastinators, compared to about 20 percent of the adult population” (36). Ellis says that students can avoid procrastination by looking at the costs of procrastination, thinking ahead, and making goals (86).

**Question 3. Choose the passage that best incorporates direct quotes or ideas from sources.**

Passage 1.

"Human development is a process in which people attempt to learn the tasks required of them by the society to which they are adapting" (Newman and Newman 69). This is something he believed.

Passage 2.

Robert J. Havighurst first introduced the concept of developmental tasks. He believed, "Human development is a process in which people attempt to learn the tasks required of them by the society to which they are adapting" (Newman and Newman 69).

**Answer Key**

Question 1.

* Passage 2 = Correct. “Correct! This passage explains the purpose of including the quote.”
* Passage 1 = Incorrect. “Not quite. This passage does not explain the significance of this quote.”

Question 2.

* Passage 1 = Correct. “Correct! This passage includes information explaining the importance of these ideas from outside sources and explains how the ideas relate to one another.
* Passage 2 = Incorrect. “Not quite. This passage groups two unrelated quotes / paraphrased ideas together without explaining what they mean or how they relate to one another. The author should include an explanation of why the ideas are important, and how they are related.

Question 3.

* Passage 2 = Correct. “Correct! This passage tells us who the quoted person is and why their view is important before introducing their quoted idea.”
* Passage 1 = Incorrect. “Not quite. We can’t tell who the author is speaking about. This could be clarified by including some identifying information about the person who is being quoted.”

**Review and Revise**

If you have time…

Give it a few days before you review and revise. A little distance will help you see your paper with fresh eyes.

If you don’t have the luxury of time, read over your work and do your best to evaluate your argument.

* Did I prove the argument I stated in my thesis?
* What parts of my argument need more support?

When you’re ready, go back and revise.

**Get Help**

Get Help If You Need It!

* Visit a writing tutor in the Learning Lab
* Talk to your professor
* Ask a librarian for help

**You’re Done!**

Take a deep breath. Or a nap. Commune with dolphins. Celebrate!

**Recap**

In this tutorial you learned how to:

* Read your sources for understanding
* Find quotes that support your argument or point of view
* Incorporate sources into your paper

Now let’s check your understanding of these concepts.

**Quiz: Building Research Papers**

The following quiz consists of 5 multiple choice questions. Each question is worth 10 points.

Choose the best answer/s and type the letters for these answers in the blank by each quiz question.

\_\_\_\_ 1. How does taking a break after reading your sources help you to incorporate them into your paper? Select ALL that apply.

1. You have the time to get a snack so you have energy to write
2. It gives you time to think about the sources and how they fit into your argument
3. It helps your brain understand your sources so you can explain them in your own words
4. None of the above

\_\_\_\_ 2. A goal or thesis statement is a good way to begin writing your paper because:

1. It helps you clarify exactly what your paper will be about
2. It helps you cite your sources
3. It gives you something to meditate on
4. It is illegal not to have a goal or thesis statement in your paper

\_\_\_\_ 3. When creating an outline or mind map for your paper, what are some questions you may ask yourself?

1. What quotes support my argument?
2. What are the weaknesses of my argument?
3. How can I defend my viewpoint?
4. All of the above
5. None of the above

\_\_\_\_ 4. What should you do instead of using large chunks of quoted material? Select ALL that apply.

1. Select the most important idea and quote only that
2. Explain why the quoted material is important in your own words
3. Don’t use outside sources at all
4. None of the above

\_\_\_\_ 5. According to this tutorial, when revising your paper make sure to check:

1. That you printed on only one side of the paper
2. That you proved your argument with sources and examples
3. That your cat didn’t type something weird by sitting on the keyboard
4. None of the above

Answer Key:

1. B, C
2. A
3. D
4. A, B
5. B

**Works Cited**

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