

"Analyze Evidence": How is this source relevant to your thesis and purpose?

Many emerging writers struggle with connecting sourced material to their claims and to their thesis. Oftentimes, this is because they're too close to their work and think that the connection between claim and evidence is completely apparent to the reader. **Even if the connection is readily visible, authors should still follow up a piece of sourced material with an explanation of its relevance to the author's point, purpose, and/or thesis.** Such connections ("analysis") should be made directly following the sourced material.

Let's say that I'm writing a research paper that suggests offshore drilling should be banned, and my thesis is as follows:

Though some may argue that offshore drilling provides economic advantages and would lessen our dependence on foreign oil, the environmental and economic consequences of an oil spill are so drastic that they far outweigh the advantages.

Following this thesis come body paragraphs relating my main points:

- (1) the known economic impact of past oil spills,
- (2) the known environmental impact of past oil spills,
- (3) the potential impact of oil spills on marine and human life,
- (4) a comparison between advantages and disadvantages of offshore drilling, and
- (5) a response to potential counterarguments.

My conclusion would then include a proposal to ban offshore drilling. For instance, in my fifth body paragraph I include the following claim and also provide the following support:

Others argue that the US need to end its dependence on foreign oil from unstable regions necessitates domestic oil production (claim). During an April 2010 speech to the Southern Republican conference, Sarah Palin responded to the ongoing debate about offshore drilling and insists that "relying on foreign regimes to meet our energy needs makes us less secure and makes us more beholden to these countries" (Malcom). [1]

I can't just stop there, because my reader would not know the connection between my point and the quote. As such, **I must make the connection for my reader.**

Ways to Connect Sources to Your Points

1. **Explain what the sourced material is saying (breaking down ideas):**

Palin’s assertion implies that the majority of our oil comes from unstable regimes in antidemocratic regions. Although I understand her concerns about providing such regimes with a measure of economic power over the United States, I believe that offshore drilling poses a greater threat to the stability of our economy.

2. **Point the reader back to the thesis:**

Though Palin’s argument is representative of a group that views offshore drilling as a necessity, it fails to acknowledge that America’s largest petroleum trading partners are not countries with unstable regimes.

3. **Point the reader back to the paragraph’s main point:**

Palin’s argument is representative of a cohort that believes in the importance of domestic oil production.

4. **Point the reader to the author’s purpose:**

Despite Palin’s (and Republicans’) protests, I argue that offshore drilling presents a more real threat to American security than do foreign regimes.

Thus, depending on where you want to go in the paragraph, you have many options for ways to make connections for your reader.

Remember, your reader is not in your brain; and as smart as he or she may be, you still need to make connections that explain the relevance or purpose of included sourced material.

[1] Malcom, Andrew. “What Sarah Palin Told Republicans—Full Video.” *Los Angeles Times*, 9 April 2011. Web. 22 Feb. 2011.

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