Incorporating Research into Writing

The paper you write will feature your ideas. The research that you do and the sources that you read should act as a springboard for your own ideas. Ask yourself the following as you choose your sources:

- Do I agree or disagree with what’s being said?
- Why do I agree or disagree? Answering the “why” is the most important step of analytical writing.

What’s the difference between a paraphrase and a quote?

- **Paraphrase**—captures the idea of the author without using the author’s exact wording. It uses more detail than in a summary. A paraphrase:
  - is similar in length to the original source;
  - does not use the author’s exact words, unless you put them in quotation marks;
  - does not use the author’s sentence structure (copying sentence structure without citation is considered plagiarism); and it
  - requires an in-text citation.
- **Quote**—uses the exact words from the source. A quote:
  - uses another’s written or spoken words;
  - always uses quotation marks; and it
  - requires an in-text citation.

- **Questions to ask yourself before you decide to quote directly:**
  - Why do I want to include this quotation? Does this quote move my argument forward?
  - Is this quote too long? Should I choose one or two sentences, or parts of a sentence, that best reflects that idea that interests me?
  - Would a paraphrase be better?

Why should I avoid a “dropped quotation”?

Whenever you use a quote, introduce and integrate source material using some of your own words. Try to integrate your sentences with quoted material, instead of just placing quotes in your paper.

- A **dropped quotation** is dropped into a paper as if it came from nowhere.
  - **Example:** Many people believe that the residents of homeless shelters are just lazy and unmotivated, but such a view may be too simplistic. “Most people who end up in homeless shelters are suffering from schizophrenia, clinical depression, or post-traumatic stress syndrome” (Moriarty 115).
- Use **signal phrases**, or transitional language, to introduce the source material.
Revised example: Many people believe that the residents of homeless shelters are just lazy and unmotivated, but such a view may be too simplistic. According to a recent study by Daniel Moriarty, a Stanford psychologist, “Most people who end up in homeless shelters are suffering from schizophrenia, clinical depression, or post-traumatic stress syndrome” (115).

- Other signal phrases: X has pointed out; X has made it clear; X explains; X suggests; As X insists; In 2003, X, the vice president of the corporation, declared...

What’s an ellipsis?

- An ellipsis is three periods, like this ... You may use an ellipsis when you wish to shorten quotes by removing extra material.

  - Original Quote
    “They have accumulated evidence of many more — hundreds by some estimates, thousands by others — most especially in the gulf’s deep, unexplored waters.”

  - New Quote, with Ellipsis
    “They have accumulated evidence of many more ...most especially in the gulf’s deep, unexplored waters.”

- When you shorten a quote, be sure that:
  - the new sentence makes grammatical sense;
  - and that you are not distorting the original idea of the quote.

What’s a block quote?

- When you want to use a very long quotation in your essay, and you are sure that an ellipsis or paraphrase is not enough, then use a block quote.

  - Use a block quote with 4 or more typed lines.
  - With poetry, use a block quote with 3 or more typed lines.

- Be sure to follow your block quote with your own commentary or analysis.
- Use block quotes sparingly. The paper should be composed of your own ideas. As the writer, it’s your job to draw connections between sources.
- See the MLA handbook for proper formatting of a block quote in poetry and prose.