

How to Research and Use Sources without Plagiarizing

1. **FIND GOOD SOURCE MATERIAL.** Choose sources that are appropriate, credible, and expert by checking the author's credentials, affiliations, and expertise. Check the domain (.edu / .gov) and sponsoring organization (universities, major news sources, professional organizations). Be wary of organizations with extreme bias, partial information, or poor writing. **SKIM SOURCES FOR USEFULNESS FOR YOUR NARROWED TOPIC** before you spend time on a close reading.
2. **GATHER YOUR SOURCE MATERIAL** into one place. One method is to copy and paste the information you want to read and annotate onto one Word document for project notes. You may want to do a separate document for each source and do digital, rather than handwritten annotations. **DO NOT USE THESE COPYAND PASTED TEXTS IN YOUR ESSAY.**
3. **LIST/TYPE THE APA CITATION INFORMATION.** At the top of each page with source and annotations, record a correct APA citation for your works cited page. This will keep your sources and notes organized and save you time and stress in documenting your sources both in your text and on your works cited page. (You will need: Author, date, source title, publication title [volume, number, pages if print pub. or journal in a database], and URL or DOI.)
4. **DO A CLOSE READING AND ANNOTATION OF YOUR SOURCES.** Read slowly and thoughtfully. Interact with the text. Highlight or underline key ideas **AND** write your comments: reactions, further explanations, connections to other sources and ideas, interpretations, agreement/objection, and conclusions. Note memorable phrasing you may want to quote.
5. **SUMMARIZE THE SOURCE INFORMATION IN YOUR OWN WORDS.** From your reading and annotations, write summaries of each section of the source material and what you took away from the information. **DO NOT LOOK AT THE SOURCE WHILE WRITING YOUR SUMMARIES!** Your summaries will be the basis of your essay—not your sources. Check each summary to be sure you have not misinterpreted or misstated the source.
6. **ADD SPECIFIC DETAILS FROM THE SOURCE TO YOUR SUMMARY.** Look back at the source for specific facts, dates, names, and data that you may want to use to **SUPPORT YOUR SUMMARY**—not the other way around: you are not adding your voice to the source information but adding source information to your voice. This method will give you an original piece of writing and avoid plagiarism. Use direct quotes and give attribution for all ideas and words from the source.
7. **INTRODUCE AND COMMENT ON SOURCE INFORMATION.** Sandwich all source use with introduction of the source and comments on the ideas/information used ("Introduce, Use, Comment"). Tell your readers what meaning they should take from the borrowed source information. Interpret it, analyze it, and connect it to your ideas. Explain what it clarifies or shows.
8. **PREPARE A REFERENCES PAGE (IN MLA, WORKS CITED).** Use the citation information you made earlier (see 3.) to create an APA-formatted source references page. Follow the logic of this basic APA website formula:

Author Last, First Initial. (Year, Month Day). Title of page or article. *Title of Website or Publication*, (volume)issue, pages if applicable. doi: or Retrieved from http://website URL