

CHECKLIST FOR WRITING FROM SOURCES

The following questions will allow you to check your draft to see if the secondary or primary sources are correctly and effectively used. The questions are arranged from those concerning content and organization to those concerning proofreading and correctness. Because effective writers usually deal with content issues before proofreading, you should be sure that you can answer “yes” to the first questions before going to the later ones.

1. Do the sources (either primary or secondary) meet the requirements of the assignment sheet? Look back at the assignment to check for any requirements stated there.
2. Have you understood the main ideas of your sources and used the sources accordingly in your draft? Most sources are written from a particular point of view. You need to be true to that viewpoint in using them. In addition, you need to account for any biases you find in the sources.
3. Did you use the sources to support your own argument rather than piecing together a draft based on the arguments of the sources? Is the majority (at least 70%) of your paper your own ideas? Drafts composed entirely from the arguments of the sources will not be coherent or focused.
4. Are the direct quotes effectively used? Do they provide specific examples for general ideas? Do they provide specific data to enhance general claims?
5. Are the direct quotes included smoothly in the draft? Do they fit grammatically into the sentence or paragraph in which you have placed them? Are they introduced and explained in your own words?
6. Are the direct quotes correctly punctuated and cited? Have you used quotation marks to indicate quoted material? Are you using block quotes? Have you included all necessary information and punctuation in the parenthetical citation (author, title, page number, and year depending on which documentation style—MLA or APA—you are using)? Check quoted material to be sure that you have copied the words accurately from the original text.
7. Are the paraphrases incorporated smoothly in the draft? Are they in your own words? If not, perhaps a quote is best.
8. Are the paraphrases correctly punctuated and cited? Even though they are in your own words, paraphrases must be documented to avoid the appearance of plagiarism.
9. Are the summaries incorporated smoothly in the draft? Are the summaries properly documented?
10. Is your Works Cited page correct? Have you followed proper MLA or APA documentation style?