

Instructor: Justin Aukema
January 7, 2018

“Using and Citing Sources”

Using and citing sources - that is, information from online articles, books, or magazines - is a crucial part of writing and constructing an argument. When you use information from such sources, you need to let your audience know where that information came from. This is to help people who want to do more research find those same sources and use them later. It is also to distinguish between *your* ideas and *someone else's* ideas. If you use information or someone else's ideas without letting your audience know where it came from, you could be committing **plagiarism** - a serious offense not only in academia, but also in politics and business.

There are three main ways to use information from sources. The first is quoting, or using a **direct quote**. Direct quotes are usually introduced by signal phrases like “according to” or “in (author's name)'s view.” Direct quotes help you draw attention to key passages in a text. They are useful when you want to preserve the author's words or style. Direct quotes should be short, and they should support an argument, example, or main point that you are trying to make. They should be placed in quotation marks and followed by a citation (see below). Here's an example of a direct quote:

- According to Andrew Gordon, “in many ways, the idea that Japan is a unified place whose people comprise a coherent nation is a creation of modern times.”
- “In many ways,” wrote Andrew Gordon, “the idea that Japan is a unified place whose people comprise a coherent nation is a creation of modern times.”

- “In many ways, the idea that Japan is a unified place whose people comprise a coherent nation is a creation of modern times,” asserted Andrew Gordon in his book *A Modern History of Japan*.¹

The second way to use information from sources is by **paraphrasing**. Paraphrasing is when you take difficult information and restate it in about the same length and in your own, simpler words. Paraphrasing is useful when you want to restate numerous points from the source that you are using. However, it can be difficult because you *must* make sure that your restatement is clearly worded in a different way than the original information. Here’s an example of how to paraphrase:

Original source

“With a few exceptions, emperors from the ninth through the nineteenth centuries were of little political consequence. They continued to play a religious role as priests in the indigenous Shinto tradition, but other figures came to rule in the name of the emperor: first aristocratic families linked to the imperial court and then military families with diverse social and political bases. Thus, the high political profile of the modernized monarchy in the nineteenth century was a major break with the past.”²

Inadequate paraphrase

With some exceptions, emperors from the ninth to the nineteenth centuries had very little political consequence. They played religious parts as priests in the local Shinto custom, but other people governed in the stead of the emperor such as aristocratic families with ties to the imperial court and then military families with various social and political supporters. Therefore, the great political profile of the modern monarchy in the nineteenth century was a huge parting with the past.

→ **Reason:** This is not adequate because it is too similar to the original. It simply changes some words but does not restate the main idea in the writer’s own words. This could be considered plagiarism even with a citation.

¹ Gordon, Andrew. *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*. (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 2.

² Ibid., 3.

Adequate paraphrase

Andrew Gordon argues that, throughout most of Japanese history, emperors had very little real power and mainly fulfilled a symbolic role. Rather, he indicates that others ruled in his stead, including military families. This means that the new emperor system from Meiji was a radical change in history.

→ **Reason:** This is good because the wording and sentence structure are different from the original

The third way to use information from sources is by **summarizing**. Summarizing is the most useful way to use information from sources. When you summarize, you condense the author's **main point** and **most important example(s)** into a much shorter sentence or paragraph. Summarizing is useful when you want to take large amounts of information and convey them in a very short and simple way. When someone asks us about a movie that we saw or a book that we read, we usually respond by summarizing the main idea and contents of the story. Imagine what would happen if we tried to recite the whole contents of a three-hundred page book to someone! Certainly, no one would have time for this. That's why summarizing is an important skill, not just for work but also for daily life. Here's an example of a written summary:

*"A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present, Third Edition, paints a richly nuanced and strikingly original portrait of the last two centuries of Japanese history. It takes students from the days of the shogunate--the feudal overlordship of the Tokugawa family--through the modernizing revolution launched by midlevel samurai in the late nineteenth century; the adoption of Western hairstyles, clothing, and military organization; and the nation's first experiments with mass democracy after World War I. Author Andrew Gordon offers the finest synthesis to date of Japan's passage through militarism, World War II, the American occupation, and the subsequent economic rollercoaster."*³

³ Oxford University Press, 2013.
<https://global.oup.com/ushe/product/a-modern-history-of-japan-9780199930159?cc=jp&lang=en&>

Summary

Andrew Gordon's *A Modern History of Japan* is an excellent student resource, since it covers a large range of pivotal events from Japan's modernization and Westernization in the Meiji Era to World War II and beyond.

→ **Reason:** The above single sentence captures the essence and main points of the original paragraph.

Finally, when we use any of the three methods above - quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing - we need to tell our audience where and from what source we got the material. This is called citing our sources, and it is an essential tool for academic and all kinds of other writing. There are different ways to cite sources, and these are called **citation styles**. The main citation styles for the humanities are **APA** (American Psychological Association), **MLA** (Modern Language Association), and **Chicago**. Which one of these you use will depend on different factors including your instructor and/or the type of writing you are doing. Therefore, it is important to familiarize yourself with all three main styles. In your own writing, you can choose one main style to work with. Whichever style you use, you must include two things anytime use use information from sources: an **in-text citation** and a **bibliographic reference**. In-text citations are usually short and come in the text, while bibliographic references are longer and come at the end of the text. Here are some examples of in-text and bibliographic references in all three citation styles:

Chicago Style

“Other people in Asia, especially the Chinese and Koreans, played a major role in Japanese history for many centuries. Indeed, the premodern histories of the Chinese mainland, the Korean peninsula, and the Japanese islands are inseparable.”⁴

⁴ Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 4.

MLA

“Other people in Asia, especially the Chinese and Koreans, played a major role in Japanese history for many centuries. Indeed, the premodern histories of the Chinese mainland, the Korean peninsula, and the Japanese islands are inseparable” (Gordon 4)

APA

“Other people in Asia, especially the Chinese and Koreans, played a major role in Japanese history for many centuries. Indeed, the premodern histories of the Chinese mainland, the Korean peninsula, and the Japanese islands are inseparable” (Gordon, 2014, p.4)

Comprehension Questions:

1. Why is it important to let our audience know where our information came from?
2. What are the three ways to use information from sources? How should each of them be used?
3. What information should you include in a summary?
4. What are the three main citation styles for the humanities?
5. What two main parts of any citation?