Chapter 22. Integrating and Acknowledging Sources

In this Chapter

22.1 Create a conversation that is smooth, credible, and ethical
22.2 Carefully select and integrate source information
- Use an appropriate blend of quotation, paraphrase, and summary
- Make a plan for selecting quotations or key information
- Don't assume source information "speaks for itself"
- Signal how you want readers to view others' perspectives
- SLICE your quotations like a surgeon

22.3 Balance source information with your own claims and analyses
- Balance sourced material at beginnings, middles, and ends of sections
- Select and limit quotations for balance
- Use an alternating pattern for balance
- Balance your use of multiple sources

22.4 Identify the complexities of using and citing sources
- What gets cited? Common knowledge, boilerplate, remix, and Gen-AI
- How do citations change? Adapting citation patterns to new genres
- What's next for citation? Acknowledging sources in the "gap generation"
- How do writers cope? Balancing rules and rhetoric

22.5 Avoid plagiarism and common citation errors
- Avoid plagiarism: Find a third way
- Avoid patchwriting or incomplete paraphrase
- Avoid insufficient acknowledgment
- Avoid formatting or mechanics errors

This chapter will prepare you to:

- Recognize the key reasons that writers integrate and cite their sources
- Identify strategies to use for integrating source material with your own analysis
- Explore the complexities of acknowledging source material
- Avoid plagiarism and other significant errors in acknowledging sources

When you narrate a story about last summer or give directions to your home, you write entirely in your own voice from your own point of view, and readers will find that your consistent perspective helps give the document a sense of "flow." However, in other writing situations, you may have reasons to interrupt your own presentation of ideas to include information from outside sources: you can provide exact evidence and gain readers' respect and trust by mentioning, summarizing, paraphrasing, and/or quoting material that other credible participants or experts have provided.

However, any time you interrupt a stream of thought or vary a writing pattern, you risk your readers feeling lost—and one goal advanced writers share is trying to keep our readers engaged. In addition, advanced writers need to give credit to others for their words, ideas, and research, so learning good strategies for integrating and acknowledging any material provided by others will improve your writing. Since writing with sources requires an *especially* rhetorical effort to address multiple voices, values, and needs, you may want to keep some threshold concepts in mind:

Good writing adapts dynamically to readers and contexts

Writing—like dancing or judo—is more about evolving actions and interactions than it is about producing a single object.

Writing is a social rather than an individual act

Writing is always connected to a community, and so your choices always do and always should reflect your interactions with other writers and readers.

Writing creates and integrates knowledge

Writing is about representing what you already know, and also about creating new knowledge through the act of putting words onto a page or screen.

22.1 Create a Conversation That Is Smooth, Credible, and Ethical

One reason to learn good strategies for integrating outside source material is to improve your cohesion or flow. There's no official rule that says every quotation needs to begin with a tag phrase such as "Nguyen argues . . ." But if Nguyen's words suddenly appear in your text—especially if Nguyen uses more technical terms, unfamiliar examples, or roundabout phrasing than you do—readers may feel as though Nguyen has barged into the document rudely, and as a result readers may find themselves disoriented or even grumpy.

Your goal is to create the sense of a smooth conversation among voices, where you are the host or emcee providing context and commentary. While a spoken conversation can evolve randomly, in a textual conversation writers need to use deliberate strategies to provide structure and flow.

In addition, US academic and professional writers belong to discourse communities in which many readers expect us to clearly identify any information that we did not dream up on our own. Readers may expect advanced writers to acknowledge or cite additional sources because:

- Readers may doubt that a writer is experienced enough to provide the most credible information
- Readers may doubt that a writer's credible information is part of a reliable pattern rather than being just one random, isolated experience that would never happen again
- Readers may believe in *intellectual property*—the concept that people own their ideas and the exact words used to express those ideas, just as much as we own phones and houses—and so worry that a writer is not giving credit to the other people who created an idea or gathered the data

Moreover, US academic culture is made up of people who make a living from their intellectual property, and so readers may think that their *ideas* are more precious than their house or their car! That's another reason that academic readers often expect writers to use a very formal citation structure to indicate the exact source of these external ideas, especially in formal genres such as a researched essay or a project report.

Although you may have instructors who focus on the intellectual property issue and their concerns about citation rules, you should keep the goals of *credibility* and *cohesion* strongly in mind. Even in a genre like an online product review or a short documentary video—genres that don't use quotation marks or APA-style citations—writers gain credibility and flow when we use strategies like the ones below to acknowledge sources and keep readers focused on our main arguments, analyses, and interpretations.

22.2 Carefully Select and Integrate Source Information

Use an appropriate blend of quotation, paraphrase, and summary

You've been using these three strategies your whole life. In talking to your friends, you summarize a boring movie, paraphrase what your mom said about borrowing her car (because you don't want to transmit every word including the fact that she still calls you "pumpkin-sweetie"), and quote an exceedingly silly sentence your friend said about downward-facing-dog pose during yoga class yesterday.

As an advanced writer, your job is to understand how each one can be useful in a writing situation, and deploy them as strategically as possible.

- **Summary** is helpful for taking a lot of information from another source and compressing it to a few sentences, to give readers a quick overview without too much interruption. A *good* summary contains the same ideas (not leaving out a key element), in the same balance (not making one issue overly dominant), with the same perspective (not making a tragedy seem humorous), and the same purpose (arguing or explaining) as the original.
- **Paraphrase** is helpful for presenting another person's single point with continuity and clarity. When you state someone else's ideas in your own words, you keep just one voice smoothly connecting with your readers—and you can often "translate" advanced or technical ideas into words that your readers can more easily understand. A *good* paraphrase includes phrases or sentences that are about the same length and specificity of the original, but that use mostly your own words and word order (though you may be able to repeat a technical term like *carbon dating* or a common phrase like "they say").
- **Quoting** is helpful for provoking or persuading on a controversial or intense topic. A *good* quotation in most academic genres will be *smoothly integrated and cited, perhaps using the SLICE approach explained later in this chapter*. Because quotations provide the most interruption, in most of your documents you should use them only when they give your writing
  - **power**: the other person said it better than you ever could,
  - **precision**: the other person's exact words are the point: the words themselves in that particular order mean something special, or
  - **professionalism**: the other person is an expert discussing a controversial or surprising point, and you need the ethos of your reader trusting their authority in their voice.

Remember that in some discourse communities and some genres, readers value direct quotations highly (such as when you analyze a short story or a movie for an essay for your English instructor) and in others, readers prefer paraphrases over direct quotations (such as when you write a literature review or summary of previous research in psychology or chemistry).

Make a plan for selecting quotations or key information

If you're going to interrupt your own ideas to include facts or words from another source, you should have a very good reason for doing so: the information should be vital, credible, and appropriate. Although it's tempting to search a source document quickly for any mention of *penguin diet* or *carbon taxes* and then paste a quotation with that phrase into your writing, advanced writers select

information more deliberately. In addition to selecting *provocative* information for a direct quotation, you should consider whether information that you quote or paraphrase matches your exact needs as a writer. At different points in your essay, you may want to increase your credibility or the precision of your ideas by using sources to:

- **Confirm** a general concept or history that experts agree on but that your readers may not be familiar with
- **Demonstrate** a concept or point vividly with data or examples that are more specific, up-to-date, relevant to your readers, or reliable than the ones you personally know about
- **Propose** claims that match or counter your own argument, to show your readers how other experts or stakeholders participate in the conversation

If you only include other experts' claims but none of their evidence, you may lose credibility; if you only include other writers' evidence, readers may not understand how experts view the situation overall.

Don't assume source information "speaks for itself"

Even a startling-sounding statistic, such as a murder rate that has dropped by 50% or 100 children home sick from school with influenza, may not mean the same thing to your audience as you think it means, or seem as credible or relevant as you believe it is. A declining murder rate may be temporary, may be measured by a particular political group with an agenda, and/or may have many causes; similarly, a hundred sick children may be a lot in a small town or relatively few in New York City or Tokyo. If you want to change readers' minds, you may need to both indicate the credibility of the source and take time to explain how the information supports your own points—even when directly stating the connection begins to feel somewhat repetitive.

For instance, you may add phrases or sentences to help you:

- **Contextualize** the source data or concepts, by providing information about the speaker, the source, the credibility of the data, or relevant background events: "This report, *which was generated in response to the September 2017 floods*, notes that . . ."
- **Translate** or define any exact terms, phrases, or references that your audience may not know: "Uddin and Syed's analysis of Okun's law—*referring to the relationship between unemployment and economic growth*—is relevant because . . . "
- **Focus** readers' attention on a key concept, data point, or word choice that they might otherwise overlook: "When the senator *uses the word 'democrat' rather than 'democratic'* in this statement, she emphasizes . . ."

- **Connect** the information to a particular subtopic or angle of your argument, particularly if you are synthesizing ideas from different sources or fields: "Zambrano's data on hotel water use in Las Vegas, Nevada, *shows what California businesses may face* soon . . ."
- **Frame** how readers should interpret the data or information, especially if there might be controversy: "Protests like these in Tunisia *do not prove that* its residents have full freedom of speech . . ."

Signal how you want readers to view others' perspectives

When you introduce outside information with a neutral tag phrase such as "Adorno writes," you give no direct indication of your judgment of Adorno's ideas. However, readers may presume that since you include Adorno's words, data, or ideas, you endorse them. Yet you will not equally endorse all the ideas or words you include in your documents; you will not even equally admire everything that Adorno writes. To help your readers understand how you view the voices and perspectives, consider using alternate verbs that signal whether you believe the information is well worth attending to or is just an idea that is being discussed somewhere.

You can also, of course, take time before or after a quotation to explain in more detail the reasons why the information or argument is convincing, intriguing, surprising, unsupported, or incorrect. The more strategies you use to make readers aware of your relationship to outside information, and its relationship to your own explanations and analyses, the more readers will perceive your writing as having "flow" and continuity.

SLICE your quotations like a surgeon

To increase your cohesion and credibility, you should avoid dropping long quotations into your document just to stand on their own, like a UFO landing in the middle of a busy street. Instead, use the following steps: Select, Limit, Integrate, Cite, and Explain your quotations.

Select the best quotation

Be sure it matches exactly what you want to say, or shows exactly what you want to argue against. A poorly chosen quotation can take your reader's attention away from your own ideas, or suggest that you don't really know what you mean. Don't just choose something you highlighted! Consider: do you want to show the author's own example, or are you looking for a statement of their general argument?

Limit your quotation size

The sentences that another writer has composed worked for their situation, but perhaps will not work as well for yours. You should aim to limit your quoted text to the minimum effective size. Short quotations are easier to integrate into your own sentence structure, so that your reader skims smoothly along from word to word. They let you remain in control of the essay, instead of turning your essay over to other writers.

In many academic or professional documents, think about having a 10-15 word limit: given the general point an outside author is making, which phrase or idea is most original, most provocative, most unexpected, most well-written? For instance, instead of quoting a 38-word sentence from an article by Jean Twenge such as, "**Eighth-graders who are heavy users of social media increase their risk of depression by 27 percent, while those who play sports, go to religious services, or even do homework more than the average teen cut their risk significantly**," you could paraphrase some information and combine it with brief quotations:

- Quote a key phrase as-is: **Twenge cites a study of eighth graders social media users that reports they "increase their risk of depression by 27 percent."** (Note that you don't need ellipses if you leave out words at the start or end of a quoted phrase.)
- Leave out less relevant material in the middle of a quotation, using ellipses to indicate an omission: **A study of social media users showed that "Eighth-graders . . . increase their risk of depression by 27 percent" (Twenge).**
- Quote a key phrase and use square brackets to add some missing information in your own words: **Twenge notes that active teens "cut their risk [of depression] significantly."** (Be sure not to change the author's intended meaning with your omissions or additions.)

Integrate your quotation

To improve the flow of your writing, you should work any quotation into your own sentence: avoid *Unidentified Flying Quotations* (UFQs). You should clearly identify whose language you're borrowing; you may also want to explain to your reader something about the outside author's expertise, to show how powerful your new evidence is.

- Use a short "tag phrase" with a comma. **Douglass writes, "____."** OR **According to Douglass, "___."** OR **Frederick Douglass, drawing on his former life as a slave, argues, "____."**

Tag Phrase Verbs

This author makes a powerful point	This author makes a strong point	This author makes a factual point	This author makes a weaker point
argues,	agrees that . . .	adds,	admits,
claims,	confirms that . . .	comments,	acknowledges,
declares,	emphasizes that . . .	illustrates this by saying,	asserts,
insists,	reasons,	notes,	believes,
refutes the point that . . .	suggests,	observes,	contends,
rejects the idea that . . .	grants that . . .	points out,	implies that . . .
		reports,	

- Use a longer explanatory phrase with a colon. **Kingsolver argues that eating local food increases connection to the community: "_____."**
- Work the author's words directly into your own sentence. (Hint: It should read as smoothly without the quotation marks as with them). **Paarlberg critiques "modern eco-foodies" as unrealistic, and says we need to "de-romanticize" our views of farming.**

Cite or acknowledge all sourced material

If you didn't write it, you need to acknowledge it—even if the quotation is very short. You should use the approach best suited to your genre and discipline. (See more about this later in the chapter.) This example uses the Modern Language Association (MLA) format for an in-text citation that includes the author's last name and the page number.

- She also explains that "there is no *she* or *her* in the tax laws" (Anthony 391).

In MLA style, if you give the author's name in the tag phrase, you need only give the page number. Be sure to check the punctuation for your citation format as well.

Explain how the quotation connects to your idea

You know words and ideas can be quoted out of context and can be interpreted to mean many different things. Is the glass half empty or half full? If researcher daynah boyd says, "Privacy is an ongoing process," does that seem insightful to you, or just vague? Is it encouraging or frustrating to think of privacy that way? Does she make her case or dodge the question? Which word or phrase is most significant to you, and why? Add a whole sentence or two if you need to!

Explore 22.1

Copy out a paragraph from one of your sources, and practice your source-management strategies on it. First, write a sentence that either summarizes the main argument and evidence of the whole paragraph or accurately paraphrases one key sentence. Then write a pair of sentences in which you integrate and explain the importance of a short quotation, using all of your SLICE approaches. Add a final note: What, if anything, did you do differently here than you are used to doing when you incorporate sources into your own writing?

22.3 Balance Source Information With Your Own Claims and Analyses

Sometimes, in a school assignment, it can seem as though you are only supposed to repeat what you have been told or read about. Even in school, though, instructors often hope that you will be able to represent your learning in your own terms and perhaps with a fresh angle. In most other situations, your goal of the writer is nearly always to present your own explanations or arguments as the primary feature of the text: if readers wanted to know what other sources said, they could read the other sources. To achieve this balance in each document or section, you may need to limit the number and length of quotations (and paraphrases), consider where and how you rely on sourced information, and explain how each piece of information contributes to your goal for the document.

Although your source information may come from people who are more experienced, credible, or famous than you, remember that you are still the author—and the authority—for your own document. Your role is not just to introduce other speakers and get off the stage, but to select, direct, frame, synthesize, and analyze information to create a new document that addresses your readers' specific needs and expectations. Writers should thus strive to balance others' ideas with their own contributions.

Balance sourced material at beginnings, middles, and ends of sections

Readers of many genres of academic and professional writing pay close attention to the sentences that occur at the starts and ends of documents, paragraphs, or other sections. Although you can use a short quotation sometimes at the start of a document to gain readers' attention, you may want to claim most of these visible spots for your own voice, so that you are gaining and directing your readers' attention based on your own perspective, rather than letting someone else's words, ideas, or facts speak for you. You can then increase your use of paraphrases and quotations in the middles of paragraphs or sections.

Select and limit quotations for balance

Although there is no perfect ratio, in many documents you should include more of your own input or analysis than of others' information. Thus, you should endeavor to keep outsiders' contributions as minimal as possible. First, you should shorten individual quotations to focus readers' attention on selected phrases that you couldn't say better yourself. Unless you are writing a report in which you are required to include all external data (all of an external lab's results, all of the spoken comments at a meeting, all of the technical specifications of the appliances you are evaluating), you should be cautious about adding a very long quotation or summary section to your document.

Also, for each section of your document, you should invest equal time in framing and explaining outside words and data. Your readers may expect, especially after a long quotation or summary of information from someone else, that you will have an equally substantive and extended analysis to offer, in which you address and analyze several separate items of the passage to which you just referred.

Use an alternating pattern for balance

You are likely to create a paragraph pattern in which summary, paraphrase, or quotation of another person or text alternates with your own explanation, analysis, or arguments. In a short work, or in an argumentative essay, this alternating pattern may occur within a paragraph: a phrase or sentence, introduced and/or followed by one or more sentences of your own analysis. You might also alternate between direct quotations and paraphrased or summarized information (unless you're writing for readers in a discourse community that highly values quotations or that strongly prefers paraphrased information). In a longer work or a report genre, this pattern may happen in larger chunks, with one or more summary or "literature review" paragraphs early on that explain what other sources have already contributed on the subject, and one or more analytical or concluding paragraphs/sections later that extend your own response.

Balance your use of multiple sources

When you write in a genre such as a movie review, you will refer almost entirely to one source. When you use a particular text or viewpoint as a lens or critical standpoint—such as considering a Freudian psychoanalytic view of divorce, or looking at how Madeleine Albright's approach to politics affected negotiations in central Asia—you will extensively quote and summarize from that one respected source, perhaps for several sentences or even several paragraphs in a row. In other situations, however, readers may not respond as well to that one-main-source approach.

You do not need to use all sources equally, but you should be wary of relying on a single source for any document or any long section of a document. When you summarize a single source at length, you become that source's "yes-person": your own new views, the ones readers most want to learn, can get lost. Also, you provide no option for readers to cross-check: what if your one source is wrong or incomplete or not entirely credible? When you integrate parallel views from two or more sources—"In a study with results similar to Michoski's findings, Trulio reports that . . ."—you not only increase your credibility with readers, but you create new knowledge by synthesizing information that may not have been previously connected.

Explore 22.2

Review a piece of your source-based writing from earlier in this class, or from another class you completed in the past year or two. (Alternately, you can review a peer's current draft for this project.) Write two sentences as if you were completing a peer review: One should praise a source-balancing strategy that you or your peer used, and one should give a specific suggestion ("In your third paragraph . . .") to improve the use of other sources' language and information.

22.4 Identify the Complexities of Using and Citing Sources

Source citation is rhetorical. This means that like the choices you make about your frame or focus, your evidence, your genre, and your writing style, you will make different choices about citation as you move from one writing situation to another, from one instructor to another, and from one source to another. If you have been thinking for a while that citation is more complicated than people seem to think, you're right.

Different discourse communities have different expectations about the best way for an author to integrate and acknowledge sources beyond their own ideas. And as more and more resources are accessed and even created online, the line between *correct and effective* source use and *incorrect or unethical* source use gets even more blurry. Because advanced writers know we may face multiple definitions of what to cite, when to cite, and how to cite, it's a good idea to anticipate complications and directly ask what the expectations are for each document we compose.

What gets cited? Common knowledge, boilerplate, remix, and Gen-AI

Do all writers always directly acknowledge all their sources? You know enough to guess that this is a rhetorical decision rather than a 100% rule. Here are some places where writers' choices are more complex.

Common knowledge

Writers no longer routinely cite a source for the information that "The earth orbits the sun." We expect most readers will accept this as common knowledge. But what's "common" is rhetorical. For instance, you may belong to a community that commonly knows philosophical statements by Emmanuel Kant or the ten baseball players with the most home runs this year. When you write for that community, you may do less acknowledgment—but when you write for outsiders who don't share your "common" knowledge, you will gain credibility and produce a richer conversation through more exact citation.

Professional "boilerplate" writing

Inside a corporation or institution, documents often repeat information and sentences without indicating the original author. Text from mission statements, quarterly reports, and policies is routinely repeated without quotation or citation: it may be considered collectively authored or owned. Even your instructor's syllabus may contain passages written by someone else and used without citation. If you go to work for another business, though, it may not be considered ethical to reuse your previous employer's language without consent or acknowledgment.

Casual or artistic remix

In the 2020s, your conversations and social media feeds are likely full of casual, informal remix: you toss in a quotation from a popular film as you chat with friends, you add your words to a visual meme started by someone else, or you dance at a club to a DJ's mix of two songs. Artists, too, often remix using others' images or ideas, from Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup posters to the latest parody song by your favorite influencer. Most artwork and parody remixes are legal, and most casual remixes go unnoticed—but if the originator of an idea, song, or design gets worried that a remix is misrepresenting the original or making money that the original author wants to make, they may have a legal case to ask for acknowledgment. And in an academic or professional setting, your readers may prefer that you make a clear distinction between your original contributions and what you borrow from other sources.

What about generative artificial intelligence?

You are living through a very fast evolution of a very complex set of questions about Gen-AI tools. Some of the news you read every day may be produced by Gen-AI, and you would never know: the rhetorical question to ask here is, "Would it make a difference to you if it was?" In some contexts or communities, text that was produced by a generative AI tool or chatbot may be treated like boilerplate text: when a high value is placed on efficiency and a low value placed on originality, Gen-AI text may be presented without indication or citation. In

other situations, including some classrooms, you may be encouraged to take a remix approach: combine Gen-AI text with your own, and indicate generally where you have extended or modified it yourself. And in still other situations, a high value on the author's creativity or perspective—or a high value on how the writer is *learning or practicing* their own strategies—may mean that readers insist that Gen-AI text be as distinctly separated and cited as a more traditional published source. As the writer, you are expected to find out what your readers prefer: if nobody tells you, you should ask an instructor, supervisor, or other key reader.

How do citations change? Adapting citation patterns to new genres

For your school writing, you may learn an exact academic style of citing sources. Learning a pattern like the one sponsored by the Modern Language Association (MLA), the American Psychological Association (APA), or the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) will help you meet readers' expectations. Like any pattern, a citation style gives readers speed and accuracy: if the order of a citation is always Author, Article Title, Journal Title, then readers know they can skip to the third element and it will always be the journal title.

When you select an appropriate citation pattern and use it correctly, just as when you spell names correctly and proofread for sentence errors, readers in a community may grant you credibility: you "write like an insider." These citation patterns are rhetorical: they are defined by current experts and often reveal what the community values—whether or not those values seem reasonable. For instance, the "author+date" structure of an APA-style citation shows that experts in that field prefer to know when research was published in order to evaluate its credibility: it makes sense that a 2001 study about adolescent depression may no longer be accurate or relevant. On the other hand, some scholars argue that the emphasis on last names in APA-style citation (which requires first initials rather than full names in a References list at the end of a document) limits readers' ability to see whether information comes from women researchers as well as men, and so may make it harder to recognize and redress gender gaps in whose work gets cited.

Citation is complicated. As you switch communities and genres, you will want to identify and use the patterns expected by their readers:

- **Magazine and journal writing** often names and describes a source, but doesn't provide in-text citation or a full list of sources at the end.
- **Blog and webpage writing** often provides direct hyperlinks to an original source rather than a formal list.
- **Social media posts** often "tag" another writer, organization, or thread to give credit and gain credibility.

- **Documentary films** and art exhibit brochures may not indicate their sources in the main scenes or text, but may have final visuals or pages that acknowledge source material.

Although a minimalist citation pattern may be acceptable in a genre you're using, remember that finding some visible strategy to represent a complete conversation and acknowledge others' contributions will strengthen your writing in many rhetorical situations.

What's next for citation? Acknowledging sources in the "gap generation"

Fifty years ago, nearly all credible information was published in paper formats, gathered together into individual magazines or journals, and stored in hardback books on dusty library shelves, organized by topic, by date, and by author. When readers wanted to check out a source that a writer referred to, they needed to know the exact title, the exact author(s), the exact date, and the exact page. Without all that information arranged in a clear order, readers would need to spend hours or even weeks tracking down information. So they expected lengthy citations that followed precise rules.

Fifty years from now, a significant majority of credible information will be available in digital form, and much of it will be keyword searchable. Readers with an online connection may be able to follow a direct hyperlink straight to the source, or do a quick search using just the author and topic, and they will expect that in a matter of minutes they will identify the source that a writer referred to.

You are writing in a gap generation: Much information is available online and locatable via a keyword search. However, not only is a lot of information still organized in printed materials not freely available, but the people with the power to set the expectations of a discourse community are still old enough to believe in and be reassured by the practice of providing a full citation. When you write for readers in these discourse communities, using their formal genres, you may still need to follow their expectations in order to gain credibility as an honest, thorough, and detail-oriented writer.

Maybe you will be part of the generation that changes our citation expectations!

How do writers cope? Balancing rules and rhetoric

You may have seen other writing textbooks that contain pages and pages of examples of how to construct different citations in different styles. For a book like this one that is focused on *teaching you to solve writing problems through reflective practice*, though, that approach doesn't make sense. While you should try to keep track of important rules, you also need to focus on larger

rhetorical concerns. Whether or not your future instructors or supervisors give you a list or a set of rules, you are still *responsible* for identifying and meeting your readers' citation expectations. This is a good time to practice your skills:

- **Ask directly:** since citation practices not only change among genres, disciplines, and courses, but evolve over time, advanced writers need to ask directly what their current readers expect.
- **Look it up**: lists of rules for citation styles are now commonplace in print and online; these resources are accurate, and frequently updated—whether on the general popular web or on the exact website of your school, program, workplace, or target publication.
- **Keep learning**: most writers will need to use at least two or three different citation or acknowledgment styles during their careers, since citations need to change to match new genres, disciplines, and workplaces.
- **Automate it**: writers increasingly have access to automated tools for creating citations, from quick online bibliography tools to comprehensive source management systems like Zotero or Mendeley, many of which are available at little or no cost to the writer.

22.5 Avoid Plagiarism and Common Citation Errors

Advanced writers in the US understand that copying someone else's ideas, data, sentences, or even phrases and presenting them as your own with no acknowledgment is seen as unethical. These expectations are linked to cultural beliefs in individual originality and ownership of ideas, which are strong values in US college and university communities. Readers in these discourse communities also expect that most writers will focus on adding new ideas into a conversation, even as writers also refer to the words and ideas of others.

Many school-based conversations about *plagiarism*—the use of someone else's language or ideas without full acknowledgment—focus on the morality and ethics of the writer's actions. Academic readers who identify source information that has not been cited worry that the writer aims to deceive them or to cheat on an assignment rather than doing their own work. Because cheating is the opposite of learning, in a school environment there can be significant penalties for students whose writing is determined to be plagiarized. As a writer for a school assignment that involves additional sources, you may find yourself stressed out about meeting the rules and avoiding penalties.

It's important to remember, though, that *cohesion* and *credibility* are equally important reasons to take good care with your source acknowledgments. If you don't acknowledge other writers' work systematically, you make it difficult for readers to follow the thread of a conversation so that they can draw reasonable

conclusions. And if your readers cannot distinguish one source from another, they may miss out on both your own new ideas and the strong, credible support you have included for those ideas.

In between large-scale cheating, such as copying a whole text or section of someone's writing and turning it in while pretending you wrote it, and very small proofreading mistakes, such as omitting a comma in a works-cited entry, there lies a large and murky continuum of errors. You should always directly inquire with an instructor or supervisor about what they will identify and penalize as *plagiarism* and what they will identify as a correctable *error*.

Avoid plagiarism: Find a third way

Why do writers copy large sections of someone else's writing and pretend that they themselves are the author? Research shows that writers are most tempted to plagiarize when under stress. Generally, people don't go to school or work fully intending to cheat their way through. However, when writers face high expectations in high-stakes situations (we need this good grade, this scholarship, or this contract in order to avoid failure) and we worry that our own time, comprehension, or skills will not be good enough to meet our readers' needs by a particular deadline, we may wonder if *just this one time* we can substitute someone else's writing for our own.

One reason I have written this book is to try to lower that stress: to focus on how students like you can stay aware of the rhetorical situation of a writing task, work in stages and steps, and use reflective practice solve your own writing problems so that you can see how to succeed using your own work. If you get to a place where it looks like your only choice is *either* to do your work and fail, *or* to cheat and succeed, I encourage you to take a step back, check with a friend, writing tutor, or instructor, and look for a third or fourth pathway that nearly always exists. Remember that in a learning situation, turning in an imperfect piece of writing where you did the best you could is better for you as a writer, better for you as a learner, and better for you as an ethical person, than turning in work that you cheated on.

More commonly, though, writers *intend* do our own work and to meet readers' expectations about acknowledging our sources. However, since different discourse communities and genres have different and often complex citation patterns, even experienced writers often make errors as we refer to others' information and language. In situations where precision is important, some academic or professional readers may identify these errors as plagiarism, whether or not the writer was attempting to deceive. So you should also learn about some of the more common errors writers make with sources, and develop strategies to avoid them.

Avoid patchwriting or incomplete paraphrase

Many writers were taught a word-to-word-substitution form of paraphrase as a first strategy: just change the words in the original sentence to synonyms. If a sentence says, "*Writers need to change their citation style to match their genre*," a substitution-based paraphrase might read "*Authors must alter their acknowledgment approach to align with their document type*."

The second sentence, however, is not yet a full and original paraphrase by the strictest of academic standards, because it uses the same sentence structure. Paraphrasing word-by-word also tends to limit writers' clarity, both because it can produce awkward language (who says "acknowledgment approach" in real life?) and because it doesn't help writers convey what we see as the crucial content. Remember, paraphrasing is most helpful at creating cohesion and clarity—but not if we write tortured sentences. A better paraphrase would re-state the whole idea: "Each new genre requires writers to cite sources differently."

Full paraphrase isn't always easy, especially with academic or professional sources, because those authors often use technical terms that can't and shouldn't be replaced, and because in order to reorder the sentence, a writer needs to be absolutely sure of its original meaning. When writers are working with difficult reading and unfamiliar concepts, paraphrasing is really difficult, and so we sometimes end up with **patchwriting**: sentences that contain patches of our own new words and patches of the original sentence. When these sentences have no quotation marks, readers may assume that all the words are our own when they're not.

Patchwriting is common: many writers patchwrite, and lots of writers have been told that it's ok to do (or not told that it's wrong). Moreover, patchwriting can be one way of learning the language of a new field. But advanced writers working in academic or professional genres should develop strategies to go beyond this approach so they can write more complete and accurate paraphrases.

The first example in the chart below comes from a field that I study, as a writing-textbook author who is interested in how students learn. While I might warm up with a patch-write, or experiment with alternating my language and quoted language, I know the ideas well enough that I can eventually create a clear (and short!) fully paraphrased version. But when I'm working in an unfamiliar field, as in the second example, I don't know what terms mean, which ones are common, which I can replace with less specialized words, and how I can best replace them. Indeed, I may not be able to even do a full paraphrase until I learn more and completely understand the reading. If you know more chemistry than I do, you can probably improve my patchwriting—do you spot any errors?—and correct my paraphrase so that I have a smoother, more accurate idea in the last cell of the chart (I'm pretty sure that "dries out from its solvent" is neither smooth nor accurate).

	Known field	Unfamiliar field
Original	"Such [concept] inventories are carefully developed to probe the extent to which students can apply relevant disciplinary concepts . . .to novel situations appropriate to the course content" (Wieman, 2019).	Structural and hydrogen bonding analysis suggests that this refolding is driven by the desolvation of the protein's hydrophobic core (Kozuch, Stillinger, & Debendetti, 2019).
Patchwriting paraphrase (not always acceptable, and not always accurate)	These idea **inventories** are thoughtfully designed to investigate **the extent to which students can** use related disciplinary points in new areas **appropriate** to class material (Wieman, 2019).	Review of **structural and hydrogen bonding** indicates that the **refolding** is a result of the **desolvation of the** molecule's water-resistant **core** (Kozuch, Stillinger, & Debendetti, 2019).
Patchwriting quoted (acceptable but sometimes awkward)	These "concept inventories" are thoughtfully developed to investigate how students "apply relevant disciplinary concepts" that match class material (Wieman, 2019).	A review of "structural and hydrogen bonding analysis" indicates that "refolding" happens when the "protein's hydrophobic core" dehydrates (Kozuch, Stillinger, & Debendetti, 2019).
Full paraphrase (always acceptable: note that writers may keep one or two common technical phrases without quoting)	Faculty can use an assignment like concept inventories to understand how well students solve new problems using conventional approaches (Wieman, 2019).	When this protein's core dries out from its solvent, it's clear from a study of the structure and the hydrogen bonding that the result is a refolding (Kozuch, Stillinger, & Debendetti, 2019).

If you find that you've been patchwriting rather than paraphrasing—and your instructor or supervisor indicates that that's not acceptable—a quick fix is to go back to using direct quotations, which are nearly always acceptable. However, that approach can disrupt your cohesion and distract readers; your document can start to look like someone else wrote most of it. A better response is to help your readers by doing your background research so that you understand the information and can present it to readers accurately in wholly new, accurate phrasings that you and they will understand.

Avoid insufficient acknowledgment

As they skim through an online magazine article, readers might agree that a single sentence at the end of the piece that identifies each of the writer's sources is sufficient. In academic and professional writing, readers often prefer much more frequent and precise indications of who said what, so that there's less likelihood of confusion. Since "sufficient" is a rhetorical term—one that depends on your

genre, discipline, instructor, supervisor, and other readers—you should always investigate whether you need to do one or more of the following:

- **Use more quotation marks:** put quotation marks around any sentences or phrases that are copied from another source. This can include even very short phrases like "compassionate conservatism" or "I have a dream," especially if the original writer or speaker created and used them for a very specific effect.
- **Give more frequent citations:** give a brief citation or acknowledgment in the text of your document right next to *every sentence* with a quotation, summary, or paraphrase that relies on an outside source—whether it comes from a printed journal, an online site, or an interview or conversation. If you believe it is absolutely clear to readers that three sentences in a row use information from the same source, you may be able to formally cite only one of the three; if not, use the same citation to "tag" each sentence.
- **Cite your multimedia**: give a brief citation (or other appropriate acknowledgment) in the text of your document next to every chart, diagram, photo, or audio clip that you found in an outside source, or that you created using data from another source.
- **Provide full source information**: give a full citation (or other appropriate acknowledgment) at the end of your document—such as those in a Works Cited or References list—that gives complete information about all the sources from which you quoted or used words, data, or ideas so that your readers can easily locate the source themselves. This usually includes key information such as author, title, source location (book, journal, and/or URL), and date of publication.
- **Cite your chatbot:** give a brief citation or acknowledgment of the Gen-AI tool or chatbot you used to produce a paragraph or section of your document; consider putting quotation marks around sentences that you copied directly from the bot's text.

In most formal academic citation styles—such as MLA or IEEE—writers need to do all of the first four acknowledgment moves listed here, consistently. In some documents or sections of your writing, that may mean that you have dozens of in-text citations as well as a final list of sources. Citation of chatbots or Gen-AI tools is a rapidly evolving situation; if you haven't received a direct explanation, citation of chatbots is likely to be seen as an ethical approach. Advanced writers thus need to use great care as we review and take notes on our sources, so we can trace every statistic and every phrase back to its original source. And as writers proofread and edit documents that include outside source information, we need to take care that we have included all the citations we need.

Use chatbots and other artificial intelligence tools wisely

Writers have always used tools to aid us: paper was an advance over clay tablets, pencils were an advance over quill pens, and word processors with spell-check were an advance over basic typewriters and print dictionaries. As a writer and a student right now, you are participating in a rapidly changing conversation about another set of tools as we examine how writers can and should use generative artificial intelligence tools (Gen-AI) such as ChatGPT, Claude, or Bing, to support our work.

You may read or hear about some very sticky questions that are relevant to a discussion of plagiarism, since there are questions regarding both the *originality* and the *credibility* of the text produced by such tools. For instance, Gen-AI tools and chatbots generate text that seems "original," but is dependent on the use of other authors' material that is published online but used without those authors' permission. In addition, Gen-AI tools often make errors in the text they produce that reduce their credibility: they may "hallucinate" facts, examples, or sources that do not exist or that do not say what the Gen-AI report indicates they say.

Most importantly, we are all exploring the ways in which writers may use Gen-AI tools in ways that enhance—but not *replace*—our originality, credibility, and human insight. You know that "There is no single definition of a 'good writer,'" and so you can understand that there is not currently a definition of "how a good writer uses text-generation tools," and there may never be a single definition. For example, you may believe that it is perfectly fine for a writer to use a tool to check for sentence-level errors, and that it is unethical for a writer to submit a document that was completely generated by a chatbot. Yet you may also know that "grammar checkers" reinforce the use of one kind of English in ways that discriminate against the ways other writers use English, while there seems to be very little ethical difference between "update this document using our company boilerplate text" and "use a chatbot to create a form letter for our clients."

It can be confusing when the rules for Gen-AI use change from one class to another, or even from one writing project to another. But it's also exciting to have opportunities to learn how to use a new tool to supplement the other skills you're developing. Part of "adapting dynamically to readers and contexts" in the upcoming years will be adapting to the opportunities and limitations concerning your use of Gen-AI tools. As a reflective writer, it's up to you to ask for guidance and support, to adjust your writing to meet your readers' expectations, and to advocate for opportunities that you believe are ethical and wise.

Avoid formatting or mechanics errors

Because information used to be so difficult to locate (see "Gap Generation" earlier in this chapter), many formal academic citation styles developed a complex

shorthand: by putting citation information in a particular order, with particular punctuation and fonts, writers could provide lots of location guidance in a compressed space. Citation styles thus have a kind of *secret code*: underlined words mean one thing, and quoted words mean another. For instance, underlined or italic titles can be used to indicate material that is bound into a book, while quoted or plain titles indicate material that is found *inside* a bound book.

The conventions that each citation style uses may make little sense to you now in the twenty-first century, when you can locate many sources just through a keyword search, and they all appear equally on your screen. Eventually, you can become part of the discourse community that changes the conventions. Until then, you might think of your ability to use a community's preferred style—and to get all the tiny details right—as a kind of "secret handshake" that demonstrates you have learned the insider code, as well as a way of showing that you can pay attention to detail.

Among the formatting or mechanics errors you may need to check for are the following:

- **The right overall style, and the right style for each kind of source**: you need to know whether your readers prefer MLA or APA (or Chicago A or Chicago B: there is always a new style to learn!), and you need to know whether your source is a *book*, a *journal*, a *whole website*, or a *single post or section*, because slightly different formats apply to each source type. (Most of these differences make sense: All books have titles and page numbers, and almost no Tweets have either, so writers need to use different citation patterns).
- **Punctuation marks around quotations**, which follow grammatical conventions.
- **Punctuation marks inside and around in-text citations**: in MLA style, in-text citations have no punctuation inside the parentheses, and normal sentence punctuation comes after the citation; in other styles, you may need commas or abbreviations inside the parentheses.
- **Punctuation and font styles used in end-of-text citations** (like Works Cited or References lists): different citation styles use commas, colons, periods, italics, and quotation marks in different patterns that can seem like an obscure secret code.
- **Order of information**: one main order-difference is that MLA style citations put the publication year at the end, and APA and other styles put the publication year earlier—because it may not make much difference whether an analysis of Willa Cather's early-twentieth-century novels was published in 1999 or 2017, but it would make a lot of difference in an article on artificial intelligence. You should also check to make sure you're not adding unnecessary information.

- **Capitalization and abbreviation patterns**: in some citation styles, all names and titles are capitalized and spelled out for formality; in others, readers prefer fewer capitalized words and more abbreviations to increase readers' speed.
- **Consistency**: whatever style you use, stay with that style. If you mention publication year sometimes and not others, not only will you provide more disruption to your document's cohesion, but readers may worry that you are providing incomplete acknowledgments. If you are citing a source that is so new or unusual that you cannot find a clear guide or model for it—for example, you want to quote from a TikTok video published under a pseudonym that you saved but that is no longer accessible online—try to use a pattern similar to one you have used with other sources.
- **Arrangement on the page**: many end-of-text citation lists are alphabetical (using whatever the first word of the citation is) but some are chronological or numerical; many lists use a "hanging indent" so that every line under the first one in each entry is indented for easier reading.

Note that if you use an online bibliography-formatting tool, or if you download formatted citations from your library or other software, you are still responsible for proofreading for errors. While you are citing in the "generation gap," even if you have a great citation tool, you should still learn how to check a style's formatting rules so you can spot any problems.

It's vital to remember that nobody is born naturally capable of formatting citations perfectly, and nobody memorizes all of their possible options. You can be a great writer and still make errors in your citation lists: errors don't mean you intended to deceive your readers, and good writing depends on many different characteristics. However, when you're writing for an audience that values intellectual property, accuracy, and attention to detail—which is a pretty good description of most college instructors—you will gain credibility and power by taking time to identify and produce appropriate acknowledgments and citations of your source material.

Explore 22.3

Imagine a writer at a computer at two in the morning when a major project draft is due. Now imagine that that writer—perhaps a friend, perhaps an earlier version of yourself, perhaps a younger student—has just finished a page that has some misuse of sources on it, but you can help them improve. Usually these errors happen out of confusion or ignorance about what's allowed and how best to work with sources, so start by writing 3-4 sentences in which you explain a couple of strategies that the writer could use to improve their work. Finally, since sometimes errors happen out of fear or stress, tell the writer something about the goals or the actual work of advanced writers that might help them feel less alone and less pressured to submit unethical or ineffective writing.

Learn

- To learn more about how to **improve your writing dispositions** to limit your frustration and lower the temptation to plagiarize, see Chapter 2, Adopting Productive Writers' Habits.
- To learn more about the ways **discourse communities can affect citation**, see Chapter 3, Responding to Readers' Needs.
- To learn more about **using cohesion strategies to integrate information**, see Chapter 7, Generating and Organizing an Early Draft.
- To learn more about **how genres can influence citation**, see Chapter 13, Applying and Adapting Genres.