Developing Skills for Synthesizing and Integrating Sources

How can you develop strong skills for synthesizing and integrating sources of information?

To strengthen your skills at synthesizing and integrating sources of information, use four strategies.

Strategy 1: Evaluate the reliability of each source.

Strategy 2: Evaluate multiple sources of information to determine if they contain corroborating or challenging information.

Strategy 3: Evaluate multiple sources of information to understand how they reflect the author's point of view.

Strategy 4: When synthesizing multiple sources of information into your writing, use a standard format for citation.

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Strategy 1: Evaluate the reliability of each source.

• Check a Web site's *About* page to learn about the group behind the site. Read the mission statement to identify the group's viewpoint.

• Check the credibility of the writer. Find out if he or she has expertise in the area you are researching.

• Check the date of the article. Always use current information.

• The three letters at the end of a Web site's domain name can suggest the site's reliability. The reliability of common domain names are described in the chart on the following screen.

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Domain	Organization	Reliability
.com	For-profit company	May be unreliable because they usually focus on selling a product or service
.edu	Educational body	Often reliable, although pages of individuals reflect their personal perspectives
.gov	Government	Generally reliable
.org	Nonprofits and other groups	Reliability varies greatly

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Directions: Which Web site would have the most reliable information about the Greek mythology?

• an entry on Prometheus on wikipedia.org

Wikipedia is widely used, particularly for noncontroversial information. However, since it allows anyone to contribute and it does not list authors, the reliability of any one article is uncertain.

• a college professor's Web page about Greek mythology

Scholarly sites are usually reliable for facts. They may also include reasoned judgments that other scholars disagree with.

• a blog about the meanings of myths today

Unless you can identify the blogger, postings on blogs are not reliable.

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Directions: Investigate five Web sites that present information about one of the topics addressed in the book, such as the qualities of the Greek gods and goddesses, the use of myths to explain nature, and the use of myths to explain human nature. Try to include a mix of sites, including ones by individuals and by organizations. Categorize each one as

- highly reliable

- fairly reliable

- not reliable

Write a short explanation of your evaluation.

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Strategy 2: Evaluate multiple sources of information to determine if they contain corroborating or challenging information.

A fact, an opinion, a reasoned judgment, or another piece of information may make a claim seem either more or less reliable.

- If information supports a claim, it is corroborating.

- If information causes doubt about the claim, it is challenging.

The next screen shows examples.

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Directions: Explain whether each statement corroborates or challenges this claim: Greek myths taught people how to act.

Statement A: Many of the Greek gods and goddesses were selfish, violent, and deceitful.

This statement challenges the claim by suggesting gods and goddesses often acted immorally.

Statement B: Prometheus demonstrated bravery and willingness to suffer to help people.

This statement corroborates the claim by pointing to an individual who acted morally.

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Strategy 3: Evaluate multiple sources of information to understand how they reflect the author's point of view.

A point of view can be a basic way of looking at the world that shapes how one interprets observations. Reading more than one passage on a similar topic can help you see how authors view the same situation from different perspectives.

Imagine a teacher tells a class, "The last test was challenging." How would each of these additional comments help you understand the teacher's point of view about giving hard tests?

- "I like to challenge students each fall and then ease off."

- "Most students did well, so the next test will be even tougher."

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Directions: Read the following account of how Pandora released evil into the world from the ancient Greek writer Hesiod. Then read the two passages after it to help you decide why Hesiod believes Hope was included in the jar with all of the evils.

But the woman [Pandora] took off the great lid of the jar with her hands and scattered all these [evil forces] and her thought caused sorrow and mischief to men. Only Hope remained there in an unbreakable home within under the rim of the great jar, and did not fly out at the door.

Hesiod, *Works and Days*

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> Hope is a bad companion for the man in need who sits in an idle place, when he has no sufficient livelihood.
>
> Hesiod, *Works and Days*

Like many Greeks, Hesiod believed that human lives were controlled by the gods. People who thought they could influence their future were fooling themselves. He once wrote, "Is there no way to escape the will of Zeus[?]"

Hesiod thinks that hope can cause people to be lazy or to fool themselves. He includes Hope with other evils because he thinks it is often bad for people.

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Strategy 4: When synthesizing and integrating multiple sources of information into your writing, use a standard format for citation.

When you use various sources of information, you should

- reproduce the information accurately

- acknowledge the source appropriately

The following screens provide examples of how to integrate three commonly used types of information.

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Whether you get information from printed books, online sources, or personal interviews, you want to use it accurately and acknowledge the source appropriately. The following slides provide examples of how to integrate three commonly used types of information into your writing:

- short direct quotations

- long direct quotations

- paraphrases of content you read

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The excerpt on the following screens is from page 3 of a classic work about Greek mythology, *Bulfinch's Mythology,* by Thomas Bulfinch. First written in the mid-1800s, these excerpts are from a 1993 edition published in New York by Random House. If your writing includes a list of works cited, the entry for this book would be:

Bulfinch, Thomas. *Bullfinch's Mythology.* New York: Random House, 1993. Print.

The screens following the excerpt will demonstrate how to integrate the information into an essay.

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If no other knowledge deserves to be called useful but that which helps to enlarge our possessions or to raise our station in society, then mythology has no claim to the appellation [label]. But if that which tends to make us happier and better can be called useful, then we claim that epithet [description] for our subject. For mythology is the handmaid of literature; and literature is one of the best allies of virtue and promoters of happiness.

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Parenthetical Citations: Identify the source in parentheses right after the information from the source. If the author is named in the text, cite the just page number. If the book does not have a page number indicate the part of the book.:

According to Bulfinch, mythology is useful because it makes people "happier and better." (3).

If the author is not named in the text, include it in the citation:

I believe mythology has made me, and others, "happier and better" people (Bulfinch 3).

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Short Direct Quotations: These are word-for-word quotations that are four lines or shorter. To tell your reader exactly where the direct quotation begins and ends, use quotation marks before and after the passage.

Bulfinch believes that "literature is one of the best allies of virtue and promoters of happiness" (3).

Long Direct Quotations: If a direct quotation is four lines or longer, set it off as a block quotation. It should be indented one inch from the left margin and include a reference to the source. Since the text is set off visually, you do not need to use quotation marks around it. Do include a parenthetical source.

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Thomas Bulfinch made mythology accessible for many people in the mid-1800s. He believed that literature and mythology were good for people.

But if that which tends to make us happier and better can be called useful, then we claim that epithet for our subject. For mythology is the handmaid of literature; and literature is one of the best allies of virtue and promoters of happiness. (3)

Today, when people are so focused on making money, Bulfinch's words remind us of the value of mythology.

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Paraphrases: These are passages written in your own words that express information that you learned from another source. Do not use quotation marks with these but do include a parenthetical citation.

Bulfinch believes that reading literature improves a person's morals and makes a person more joyful (3). This might explain why I like to be around people who love mythology.