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 slide.

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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 writer James Baldwin?

- an entry on James Baldwin found 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 scholar's Web page about great American writers

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

- a blog about race relations in the United States

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

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Directions: Investigate five Web sites that present information about the Harlem Renaissance. Include a mix of sites, including ones from educational institutions and advocacy 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, opinion, reasoned judgment, or other 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 slide shows examples.

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Claim: The Harlem Renaissance was a success.

Do the following statements corroborate or challenge the claim?

Statement A: Historian Christopher Buck concluded that by removing "the masks of racial stereotypes" on African Americans, the Harlem Renaissance "improved race relations somewhat."

This statement corroborates the claim.

Statement B: Langston Hughes said, "the ordinary Negroes hadn't heard of the Harlem Renaissance, and if they had, it hadn't raised their wages any."

This statement challenges the claim.

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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.

Consider how two people who view dogs differently might react to a friend's dog when it approaches them.

- A person who assumes dogs are friendly might try to pet the dog.

- A person who assumes dogs can be dangerous might try to back away from the dog.

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Directions: Read the following two statements. Both writers believe that the literature and paintings created by African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance was quite similar to what was created by whites. However, their assumptions about the relationship between black and white culture differ sharply.

Evaluate the point of view of each writer toward the similarities in art created by black and white artists during the Harlem Renaissance.

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Aside from his color, which ranges from very dark brown to pink, your American Negro is just plain American. Negroes and whites from the same localities in this country talk, think, and act about the same. . . The [African American] is subject to the same economic and social forces that mold the actions and thoughts of the white Americans. He is not living in a different world as some whites and a few Negroes would have me believe.

George Schuyler, "The Negro Art Hokum"

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[The] Harlem Renaissance could not overcome the overwhelming White presence in commerce which defined art and culture. What was needed was a rejection of White values . . . in order that they could be themselves in life and art.

Paul Reuben, "Harlem Renaissance— A Brief Introduction"

In the first statement, Schulyer's point of view is that black and white culture are very similar. He implies that the writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance were wrong to try to create works that were distinctively black.

In the second statement, Reuben's point of view is that African American artists tried to be successful by following white standards. He criticizes artists of the Harlem Renaissance because they did not go far enough in expressing the distinctions between white and black culture.

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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 slides 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

The following excerpt is from *Harlem Renaissance*, by Nathan Irvin Huggins, page 5. The book was published in 1971 by Oxford University Press of New York. At the end of your paper, you would include a list of works you cited. Your entry for this book would be:

Huggins, Nathan Irvin. *Harlem Renaissance.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1971. Print.

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

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A positive self-image—there was cause for one—was considered the best starting point for a better chance. Inequities due to race might best be removed when reasonable [white] men saw that black men were thinkers, strivers, doers, and were cultured, like themselves. Harlem intellectuals, with their progressive assumptions, saw themselves as the ones most likely to make this demonstration. They were on the threshold of a new day.

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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:

> According to Huggins, African Americans thought they could fight racism by demonstrating that they were "thinkers, strivers, doers, and were cultured" like the white leaders (5).

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

> African Americans thought they could fight racism by demonstrating that they were "thinkers, strivers, doers, and were cultured" like white leaders (Huggins 5).

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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.

Huggins argues that "Harlem intellectuals, with their progressive assumptions, saw themselves as the ones most likely" to impress to whites with their artistic and intellectual abilities (5).

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Long Direct Quotations: If a direction quotation is four lines or longer, set it off as a block quotation. It should be indented one inch from the left margin, double-spaced, 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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The leaders of the Harlem Renaissance were very conscious that they were shaping a new movement.

> Harlem intellectuals, with their progressive assumptions, saw themselves as the ones most likely to make this demonstration. They were on the threshold of a new day. (Huggins 5)

This gave them both a sense of their special place in history as well as a sense of responsibility.

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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.

Huggins thinks that the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance saw themselves as on the verge of a dramatic change in race relations (5).

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Statistics: Integrate statistics just as you do text. The chart below shows statistics on the racial make-up of the population of Harlem between 1910 and 1940.

Year	Total Population	Percentage White	Percentage Black
1910	181,949	90%	10%
1920	216,026	67%	32%
1930	209,663	29%	70%
1940	221,974	10%	89%

Source: Andrew Beveridge, "Harlem's Shifting Population"

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Here is an example of how the information in this source would be integrated into a sentence.

The African American population in Harlem grew rapidly in the early 1900s. It went from 10 percent of the population in 1910 to 89 percent in 1940 (Beveridge).