

Developing Skills for Synthesizing and Integrating Sources

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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 the Vietnam War?

- an entry 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 Web page on the number of Americans killed and missing from the war maintained by the Department of Defense

As a government Web site, this is factual and reliable.

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Directions: Which Web site would have the most reliable information about the Vietnam War?

- a personal blog about the ongoing effects of the Vietnam War

Bloggers often combine facts and opinions to advocate a position, so they are usually less reliable.

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Directions: Investigate five Web sites that present information about the challenges that Vietnam veterans faced upon their return from war. 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 screens show examples.

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Claim: The war in Vietnam was mainly fueled by the fear of the spread of communism.

Does the following statement corroborate or challenge the claim?

A. President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, 1961: To those peoples in the huts and villages across the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required, not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

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Claim: The war in Vietnam was mainly fueled by the fear of the spread of communism.

These comments challenge the claim. Kennedy appeals less to the fear of communism and more to the idea that America has a responsibility to help those in poverty because it is the right thing to do.

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Claim: The war in Vietnam was mainly fueled by the fear of the spread of communism.

Does the following statement corroborate or challenge the claim?

B. From President Nixon’s “Silent Majority” speech, November 1969: Well, let us turn now to the fundamental issue. Why and how did the United States become involved in Vietnam in the first place? Fifteen years ago North Vietnam, with the logistical support of communist China and the Soviet Union, launched a campaign to impose a communist government on South Vietnam by instigating and supporting a revolution. In response to the request of the Government of South Vietnam, President Eisenhower sent economic aid and military equipment to assist the people of South Vietnam in their efforts to prevent a communist takeover.

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Claim: The war in Vietnam was mainly fueled by the fear of the spread of communism.

Nixon's statements corroborate the claim.

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Directions: Evaluate whether claim A is challenged by or corroborated by statement B.

A. By 1969, many Americans believed that the U.S. should pull out of Vietnam.

B. In November of 1969, over 250,000 Americans gathered in Washington, D.C., for the largest anti-war protest in American history.

Statement B gives evidence for statement A, so B corroborates A.

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

The author's purpose will influence which facts he or she emphasizes or downplays. Advertisers often do this to highlight the strengths of their product.

Directions: The following screens contain different points of view of the Vietnam War. Decide how each writer's point of view influences the facts he emphasizes.

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A. President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, 1961:

To those peoples in the huts and villages across the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required, not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

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B. President Richard Nixon’s “Silent Majority” speech, November 1969:

In January I could only conclude that the precipitate withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam would be a disaster not only for South Vietnam but for the United States and for the cause of peace.

For the South Vietnamese, our precipitate withdrawal would inevitably allow the Communists to repeat the massacres which followed their takeover in the North 15 years before; they then murdered more than 50,000 people and hundreds of thousands more died in slave labor camps.

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C. John Kerry, testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, April 1971:

In our opinion, and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam which could happen that realistically threatens the United States of America. And to attempt to justify the loss of one American life in Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos by linking such loss to the preservation of freedom, which those misfits supposedly abuse, is to us the height of criminal hypocrisy, and it is that kind of hypocrisy which we feel has torn this country apart. . . .

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... we found that the Vietnamese, whom we had enthusiastically molded after our own image, were hard-put to take up the fight against the threat we were supposedly saving them from.

We found most people didn't even know the difference between communism and democracy. They only wanted to work in rice paddies without helicopters strafing them and bombs with napalm burning their villages and tearing their country apart.

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In statement A, President Kennedy promotes the idea that America has a duty to promote freedom and financial prosperity in the world. He appeals to American's sense of right and wrong.

In statement B, President Nixon is speaking of the process of withdrawing troops from Vietnam. His viewpoint is somewhat similar to Kennedy's in that America is seen as the protector of the people of South Vietnam. Unlike Kennedy, Nixon names the communists as the enemy.

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However in statement C, John Kerry has the perspective of a soldier who fought in the war and who understands the point of view of the Vietnamese people. He believes that America's leaders have become involved in a cause that is not noble and that is not worth the cost of American lives. He states that the people in Vietnam don't want America's help. He implies the U.S. should not fight wars merely to bring democracy and the American way of life to other countries.

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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 should 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 following excerpt is from “A President’s Pain as We Sound Retreat,” by Gerald R. Ford.

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

That was probably the hardest day of my presidency for me. I had supported Kennedy when he sent our first combat troops to Vietnam. I supported Johnson even though I differed on some of his military strategy, but I supported the effort to try to win the war. I did the same with Nixon, and with all my support, I’m the president who ends up losing the war.

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Parenthetical Citations: Identify the source in parentheses by listing the author's last name (or the organization's name) and the page number (if available).

Example: If your source was the online article “A President’s Pain as We Sound Retreat” by Gerald R. Ford, your entry in your works cited list would look like this:

Ford, Gerald R. “A President’s Pain as We Sound Retreat.”
Newsweek 1 March 1999. Web. 3 July 2012.

Your on-page parenthetical citation would look like this:

(Ford)

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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.

Example of Citation of a Short Direct Quotation

“That was probably the hardest day of my presidency for me. I had supported Kennedy when he sent our first combat troops to Vietnam” (Ford).

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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, 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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Example of Citation of a Long Direct Quotation

President Ford described his feelings as he watched the evacuation from the U.S. Embassy in Saigon on April 29, 1975.

That was probably the hardest day of my presidency for me. I had supported Kennedy when he sent our first combat troops to Vietnam. I supported Johnson even though I differed on some of his military strategy, but I supported the effort to try to win the war. I did the same with Nixon, and with all my support, I'm the president who ends up losing the war (Ford).

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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.

Example of Citation of a Paraphrase

President Ford expressed his sorrow that for all the support he gave to Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon during the Vietnam War, he would go down in history as the president who lost the war (Ford).

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Statistics: Integrate statistics just as you do text. For example, the chart below shows the number of soldiers killed in American wars.

War	Number of Soldiers Killed
Civil War	620,000
World War I	116,516
World War II	405,399
Vietnam War	58,209

Source: Congressional Research Service

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

Approximately 58,200 soldiers were killed during the Vietnam War (Congressional Research Service).

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Directions: Use the statistics in the following chart to write a statement about the number of troops killed in the Vietnam during one period of the war.

Vietnam War Deaths Recorded by Year	
1965	1,863
1966	6,143
1967	11,153
1968	16,592
1969	11,616
1970	6,081

Source: archives.gov

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The greatest number of casualties during the Vietnam War occurred between 1967 and 1969, with the greatest number of deaths (over 16,500) recorded in 1968 ([archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov)).