

# 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 three 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:** 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 Jesse Owens, an Olympic hero?

- 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 Ohio State University Web site (library.osu.edu)

The .edu on the domain name indicates that the Web site is maintained by an educational body. This should be reliable.

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**Directions:** Which Web site would have the most reliable information about Jesse Owens, an Olympic hero?

- a personal blog entry about Jesse Owens

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 Jesse Owens, Rosa Parks, or another heroic African American. Include a mix of sites, including ones from educational institutions and the government. 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.

When conducting research, you may find that multiple sources contain conflicting information. Study the examples on the following screens.

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The seventh child of Henry and Emma Alexander Owens was named James Cleveland when he was born in Alabama on September 12, 1913. "J.C.", as he was called, was nine when the family moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where his new schoolteacher gave him the name that was to become known around the world. The teacher was told "J.C." when she asked his name to enter in her roll book, but she thought he said "Jesse". The name stuck and he would be known as Jesse Owens for the rest of his life.

from [www.jesseowens.com](http://www.jesseowens.com)



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It was there on Sept. 12, 1913, that James Cleveland (J.C.) Owens was born, the last of 10 children raised by Henry and Mary Emma Owens. At that time, Jesse's parents were sharecroppers and the family lived on a meager income. . . . the Owens family moved to Cleveland, settling on the east side.

In Cleveland, Jesse enrolled in Bolton Elementary School, where, the story goes, one of his teachers, misinterpreting how he pronounced "J.C." because of his southern accent, started calling him "Jesse." The name stuck.

from [library.osu.edu](http://library.osu.edu)

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**Directions:** Identify the conflicting information in each text. Decide how the differences could be explained.

Response: One text says Jesse's mother's name was Mary Emma. The other says it was Emma. It is likely that her given name was Mary Emma, but she was called Emma by her family. You could also consult another source and see if your theory is supported.

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When you find sources with information that does not agree, try the following:

- Evaluate the sources. Is one more reliable than the other? Use the information from the most reliable source.
- Find more sources and evaluate which information is more commonly cited.
- Consider the date of your source. If your subject is historical, records from people who were alive during the time are generally more accurate. If your subject relates to modern times, use the most recent, up-to-date information available.

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**Directions:** Study the texts again and find any corroborating information.

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from [library.osu.edu](http://library.osu.edu)

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**Directions:** Study the texts again and find any corroborating information.

**Suggested Response:** Both Web sites give the same information about how J.C. became “Jesse.” One gives extra information about his southern accent.

**Directions:** Integrate information from both sources into a statement about how Jesse Owens got his name.

**Suggested Response:** Jesse Owens was born James Cleveland (J.C.) Owens. When his teacher asked his name, she thought J.C. said, “Jesse,” due to his southern accent. The name stuck for the rest of his life.

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**Strategy 3:** 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 following excerpt is from *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson.

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

My home situation was very congenial. I have a marvelous mother and father. I can hardly remember a time that they ever argued . . . I grew up in a family where love was central and where lovely relationships were ever present. It is quite easy for me to think of the universe as basically friendly mainly because of my uplifting hereditary and environmental circumstances.

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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 Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by Clayborne Carson, your entry in your works cited list would look like this:

Carson, Clayborne, ed. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King*. New York: Warner Books, 1998. Print.

Your on-page parenthetical citation would look like this:

(Carson 5) or (5), if you mentioned the author's name in the paragraph

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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**

“My home situation was very congenial. I have a marvelous mother and father. I can hardly remember a time that they ever argued” (Carson 5).

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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**

King remembered his home as a place of love and peace.

I grew up in a family where love was central and where lovely relationships were ever present. It is quite easy for me to think of the universe as basically friendly mainly because of my uplifting hereditary and environmental circumstances. (Carson 5)

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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**

King's philosophy of peace and love was directly influenced by the nurturing environment of his family home (Carson 5).