

# Using Textual Evidence in Essays

Of course, there is a great deal involved in using textual evidence, but this short list will serve our present purpose. The key point to remember is that your use of other texts is not limited to quoting from authors with whom you agree (though this will be the most common use). You can use other texts

- as sources of evidence
- as objects of analysis
- as sources of data or information
- as authorities to support your claims
- as representatives of opposing points of view

There are three main ways to use evidence or examples from a text to illustrate your own points in an essay. They are:

1. Making a reference to the author or the text
2. Paraphrasing the author by telling about the ideas or story in your own words
3. Directly quoting from the text

When you first refer to, or paraphrase or quote from another work you should try to incorporate into your sentence the full name of the author and the title of the text. Here are some rules about titles:

- The title of an article in a journal, newspaper or magazine, or the title of a television show episode is placed between quotation marks.
- The title of a book, magazine, television series, or movie is underlined (or italicized).

Subsequent references to the same work and author can use the last name of the author or the title of the text. For example:

In “Interracial Generation: ‘We are who we are,’” Daryl Strickland describes the plight of mixed-race individuals who can find no category on forms such as the census to describe their particular background. The push for recognition of multiracial people is long overdue, suggests Strickland, who notes that “Nearly everyone can trace racial mixture in their heritage” (1). This racial mixing will only increase in the future. Strickland points out that the rate of “married interracial couples has jumped 275 percent since 1970” (1), while that of same-race couples has increased only 16 percent over the same period.

In the above example, the first sentence is a reference to both the author and the text. The second sentence includes a brief quotation, and the third sentence is a mix of direct quotation and paraphrase. Here are a few more examples:

<b>Reference</b>	Strickland tells the story of Minty Nelson, a 27-year-old Seattle University employee and student, whose encounter with a census worker epitomizes the identity battle faced constantly by multiracial people.
<b>Paraphrase</b>	According to Strickland, many civil-rights groups have united in opposition to these proposed census changes. What concerns these groups is that racial data from forms like employment applications and the census are needed to ensure fairness in a society that still judges people by the color of their skin. In addition, this data is used to redraw district boundaries, distribute federal aid, and ensure equal access to health care and other government services (2).
<b>Direct Quotation</b>	Some would like to do away with racial categories completely, though, most remain cautious about such a change. Ramona E. Douglass, president of the Association of MultiEthnic Americans represents this cautious view. “I’d love to get rid of the categories,” said Douglass, “But as long as we have them, I don’t intend to be invisible” (2).  Graham asks “How will society perceive him? As black, like his father, or as white, like his mother?” (2).

## A Few Cautions

There are a few points to remember when using text to illustrate your point:

- While someone else’s words can really help you make your point, the reader is most interested in **your** words, so make your references, paraphrases and quotes relatively brief.
- Integrate direct quotes into the language (i.e. grammar and verb tense) of **your writing**.
- Choose what you want to use **carefully**. Make sure you need it to illustrate your point, and then make sure that you provide the context necessary for the reader to understand how the material illustrates that point.
- Always cite the text and author you are using. Failure, even if unintentional, to properly acknowledge someone else’s words or ideas is plagiarism.

## Citing Sources in the Text

Parenthetical citations should be as brief and as few as possible. This means it is best to incorporate the author(s) and the work into the content of the sentence so that all that is left is to include a page number at the end. For example:

According to Strickland, there has been a biracial baby boom since the 1960s, and Americans today are not as opposed to this as in the past. A Gallup Poll in 1991 showed that for the first time, “more Americans approved of marriage between whites and blacks (48 percent) than disapproved (42 percent)” (1).

**Note that the page number is enclosed in parentheses and that the punctuation which belongs to the sentence is placed after the citation. However, note the last example in the Direct Quotation box on page 1 where the question mark is placed inside the closing quote mark, followed by the parenthetical page reference, followed by an ending period.**

**Also, a quoted phrase inside of your quote should be marked by single quote marks (‘We are who we are’ in the title of Strickland’s article).**

## Using Outside Sources in an Analytical Way

Let’s say I want to write an essay on the tension between freedom of speech and the right not to feel violated in a public space. I may want to use Patricia William’s article, “Hate Radio.” I need to introduce the text and author, possibly summarize it briefly, quote or paraphrase the part I am using, explain what I think it means, then connect it to the point I am trying to make. Below is an example

In Patricia William’s article, “Hate Radio,” she makes the point that radio shows that use sexism and racism to entertain listeners are doing great harm to people of color and women, while claiming that their shows demonstrate the tremendous freedom that we enjoy in this country. The men who put on these shows say that all they’re doing is providing a place where people can talk about “what [they] believe inside” (727). What they do not acknowledge is that these comments, so full of hate and bigotry, make it acceptable for women, homosexual people and people of color to be treated with little or no dignity. She discusses the semi-public places where people go to listen to shows put on by people like Rush Limbaugh and Howard Stern, and while it is true that the people being offended in these shows do not have to stay and listen, it also means that they are forced to face the fact that some businesses would rather lose customers than treat these people with dignity.

Below is another example, for an essay that looks at the tension between the individual right to succeed versus the needs of the community:

In “Masters of Desire: The Culture of American Advertising,” by Jack Solomon, he shows how advertising creates our ideas of what success means. Citing specific commercials, he explains that when we see someone driving their Lexus, or Mercedes, along the quiet country road, presumably to their quiet “country house,” what we are seeing is the “sign of power” that this car represents (492).