

Yuba College Writing and Language Development Center
Citing Sources with Signal Phrases

When you use somebody else’s ideas in your essay or research paper, you need to give that person credit. You must name, or *cite*, your source whether you borrow the exact words (enclosing them in quotation marks), or paraphrase (put the ideas into your own words). You must cite any time you use any fact, assertion, or detail that is not common knowledge. This borrowed information is often introduced with a signal phrase or sentence. This lets your reader know that what follows will be someone else’s idea. How you give credit to your sources depends on the citation guidelines (for example, MLA or APA) your teacher wants you to follow. It is a good idea to establish the credentials or qualifications of your sources when you first cite them, such as **researcher** *David Evans*, or **activist** *Jessica Cantrell*).

A signal phrase can introduce a direct quote:

In the words of journalist Alan Brooks, “Iran’s refusal to grant access to the international community will only lead to economic sanctions and further skepticism on the part of the West” (18).

“We don’t have enough evidence yet,” *writes researcher David Evans in a New York Times* editorial. “Until we get the results of the studies being conducted by the Department of Health, there’s no telling what the long-term side-effects of Substance D might be.”

Signal phrases also introduce indirect quotes (paraphrases):

Despite evidence to the contrary, *activist Jessica Cantrell (1993) has suggested* that the monthly cost of the Iraq War exceeds what the state of Washington spends annually on education (p. 142).

As biologist Petra Johansson has noted, sharks are less likely to attack when water temperatures reach 70 degrees (172).

You can also use a signal phrase to combine a partial direct quote with a paraphrase:

According to psychologist David Jones, children with mild cases of ADD are “more commonly over-diagnosed than under-diagnosed” if there is a history of the condition in the family (45).

In “A Manifesto for the Comedown” (1969), *Bales indicates* that “the radicalism of the youth culture” has run its course and can only be reinvigorated through a new set of “clearly defined” principles (p. 12).

The following verbs indicate authorship and can signal a direct quote or paraphrase:

Admits	Claims	Declares	Notes	Refutes	Thinks
Agrees	Compares	Denies	Observes	Rejects	Writes
Argues	Confirms	Emphasizes	Points out	Responds	
Believes	Contends	Insists	Reasons	Suggests	

