

Writing with Texts: Formal Source Introductions

We write with texts to

- situate our own ideas and experiences in terms of someone else's ideas and experiences.
- provide context for our readers – it helps bring ideas to life for the reader in a way that is clear and meaningful.
- help develop our own projects, but use another person's ideas to explain, analyze, and/or make meaning out of our own ideas/experiences.

When academics write with a text, they are “rewriting” that author's project into their own projects, so that they can make some USE of it. **They don't just drop names or plug in quotes to show they've read something – that's not very meaningful or useful to the author or the audience.**

The way you write with a source in your own paper should

- help your audience understand that author's project and how it relates to your own project
- help you advance your own project or thinking in some way

Formal Source Introduction

When you incorporate a text into your project, you have to formally introduce the text (source), so that your reader can get the “big picture” view of the author's project. This is necessary for the reader to understand your use of the source – without it, the reader doesn't have all the necessary info to make sense of your use of the text. Writing a successful source introduction requires awareness of three things:

1. the purpose and intention of the source,
2. the role of the **author** in a larger, ongoing discussion about the topic in question, and
3. the relationship between the source and your own project.

When you actually write them, however, source introductions vary in form and style, but they tend to have these three parts in some form:

- the author's full name (and perhaps some indication of his/her expertise on the subject),
- the title of the piece in question, and
- a subjective summary, which gives you leeway to interpret the text and highlight the points that are central to your own discussion of the text.

Try to limit yourself to 3-5 sentences, but try to include as much crucial info as possible.